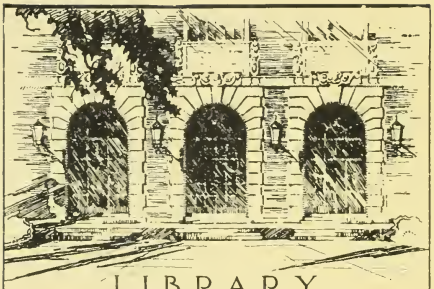

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WALLACE;

OR,

THE DAYS OF SCOTLAND'S THRALDOM:

A Romance.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

"We read of one right famous of renown,
Of worthily blood, that reigned in this region,
And henceforth now I will my process hold
Of William Wallace, as ye have heard it told."
BLIND HARRY

VOLUME I.

ADAM & CHARLES BLACK, EDINBURGH:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS, LONDON.

MDCCCLII.

PRINTED BY STEVENSON AND COMPANY,
32 THISTLE STREET, EDINBURGH.

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PREFACE.

It is well known that legends abound, in every nook and corner of Scotland, relating to incidents in the life of our great Patriot Hero, which are unnoticed, or only partially alluded to, by those who have recorded his deeds. In fact, from the time when he became openly opposed to the usurpation of Edward, his career was a series of hair-breadth escapes, and of daring adventures, of the most romantic description. Many of these were collected, some sixty years after his death, by Blind Harry, and faithfully chronicled. Others have continued to float down the stream of time from age to age, even to the present day; and it is a fact remarkably illustrative of the hold he had on the imaginations of men, and also of the degree

of credit that is to be given to these traditions, that many words are found in them which are obsolete now in the vernacular, and which the simple shepherd who tells the tale perhaps does not understand, yet thinks necessary to the truthfulness of his narrative, and therefore never omits, because it was so handed down to him, in all the freshness and originality of ancient times, through nearly twenty generations, enthusiastic in their admiration of, and tenacious of aught that related to, the martyr of their country's freedom.

The following tale is founded on one of these; and the author has not deviated materially from the original. Blind Harry says but little of the lady whom Wallace married, but he casually, in different places, mentions facts which tend to corroborate the principal incidents in the legend relating to her. Thus, in speaking of the elder Heselrig, in connection with the lady, he says—

> "But Heselrig had a matter new begun,
> And her desired in marriage for his son."

He also mentions the hills of Cumnock (Cumno) frequently as the resort of Wallace and other patriots, who were obliged to live in concealment; and it would seem from one expression that they had a fixed residence near Blackcraig Hill. He says,

> " To the Blackcraig in Cumno part again,
> Where three months he dwelt in good rest."

Local circumstances also support the truth of the tradition; for instance, there is a stone in Afton Glen that is called to this day Wallace's Stone. The name of the Celtic lords of Cumnock is altered from the original story, which represents it to have been M'Rierick; and the M'Ricricks of Kerne, in the neighbourhood, are said to have sprung from the race. This family became extinct only during the last century.

The Author here, with all humility, endeavours to narrate these unrecorded occurrences in the life of our hero without trenching on the solid ground

of the historian. He sometimes, indeed, when describing what has been also noticed by Blind Harry, takes the liberty to adhere rather to that which he has obtained from oral tradition, but without making any considerable variation. With regard to certain phrases and words used by him, he begs to say, that he has endeavoured to give to them the meaning which they bore at the period to which the tale refers. Thus the word "noble" is applied as it was then to all who were descended of families possessed of coat armour. "Lord" was used in its more comprehensive sense also, and had nearly the same meaning as "laird," or "baron" some generations later, when these titles were given in Scotland to all considerable land-owners who were vassals of the Crown, and were not of the peerage.

PORTOBELLO, 27*th Dec.* 1851.

CHAPTER I.

His stature manly, bold and tall,
Built like a castle's battled wall;
Yet moulded in such just degrees,
His giant strength seems lightsome ease;
His eye had that compelling dignity;
His mien that bearing haught and high,
Which common spirits fear.
* * *
A half-clad serf was all his train.
Lord of the Isles.

On a day in Spring, about the end of the thirteenth century, two strangers approached the water of Irvine, in Ayrshire, near the bridge which then stood between the villages of Riccarton and Galston. They were evidently master and servant; for the former had a fishing-rod in his hand, and the latter carried a basket at his back, obviously meant to receive the fish that might be

caught. The master was a youth of little more than twenty, but of a size and strength which few men possess at any age. The symmetry of his form was so perfect, that his height, which approached the gigantic, did not appear remarkable to the casual observer. His face was oval, his nose slightly acquiline, and his eye of a dark grey. His auburn hair curled closely under the cap or bonnet which he wore, and which was graced by a feather, indicating his claim to the rank of gentleman; the beard, of darker hue, was short, corresponding with his age, and he had a thick fringe on the upper lip. The countenance formed by these features was strikingly handsome, and such as would instantly attract the notice of a stranger. But it was remarked that those whose gaze was directed to his face in admiration of its beauty, had it fixed by a sort of fascination, for which they found it difficult to account, but which they were aware, had no connexion with, or origin in, mere regularity of feature. It was that expression of calm quiescent power, of latent energy of mind, which his aspect bore on all occasions, and which

mysteriously and unwittingly, on his part, exercised its influence over ordinary men. His attire, although a plain cloak and doublet of dark-coloured cloth, was cut in the fashion worn by gallants of the day.

His follower belonged to a class then numerous in Britain, who, in old charters, under the appellation of "natives," are mentioned as being transmitted from father to son, or from one landholder to another, along with the land. He was clothed in a sort of doublet of coarse woollen cloth, fitting close to his person as far as the haunches, and expanding there into the form of a kilt, which reached to the knee; brogues or sandals of dried cow-skin, with the hair outside, which were laced by thongs of leather to above the ankle, completed his dress. He had no cap nor bonnet, and his legs and arms were bare. His head was protected by a thick shock of fiery red hair, which fell about his neck and over his ears, and even eyes occasionally, in rude profusion. He trudged along, easily keeping pace with the small steed of his master, until, dismounting at the bridge, the latter spoke a few words

in Gaelic, still the language of the general body of the people in Ayrshire, and proceeded to arrange the fishing-tackle and to begin his amusement.

After turning loose the well-trained hobler to graze in the meantime, his follower lounged carelessly over the parapet, watching the progress of the fishing, and only approaching his master when he saw there was something to be deposited in the basket. This had not continued long till the scene was changed by the appearance on the bridge of four men in green, who wore on their barret caps the red cross of St George. They advanced with an air of haughty superiority, to the more humble individual who, nevertheless, kept his seat quietly on the parapet.

" What do'st stare at, fellow ?" said the foremost, gruffly. " Did'st never see an Englishman before ? Prythee, Dick, be this one of the wild Scots, men speak of, who live in the wilderness and feed on nuts and acorns like our hogs ? Sure he doth not dwell among Christians !"

" 'Mass," replied Dick, " I think he be, for his

eyes are like a wild-cat's, and his beard, St Anthony! it would kindle tinder."

So saying, he put forth his hand cautiously, like one who strokes an animal, of whose peaceful nature he is not well assured, to catch the other's beard; but he drew back with a sort of growl and a menacing gesture, that amused the Southrons exceedingly. In the meantime they had descried the master below.

"Ho! Sir Scot, hast any fish?" asked the first speaker, who seemed to be their leader. "Wilt thou come up and give us what thou hast, or shall we take it from this valorous servitor of thine?"

But no answer came from the fisher.

"Now this passeth!" cried Watt of Badley, the leader, impatiently. "Dost think, Scot, that a cock's feather in thy cap doth entitle thee to disdain an English yeoman, who is thy equal, if thou wert noble, seeing thou art but a Scot? Dost hear? Nay, an thou wilt not speak"—

"What wouldst thou, Southron," cried a deep stern voice from below; "go thy ways and trouble me not."

"Thou be d——!" cried Watt in wrath; "are we to be thus evil entreated in this beggarly country? Seize the fish," continued he, grasping the beard of the poor fellow who had charge of it, while another laid hold of his basket; but springing alertly to one side, and giving at the same time a tap on the head to his nearest opponent, the Scot rescued both beard and fish from the enemy, and, exclaiming in a strong guttural accent, "what duss ta Soothron want?" stood on the defensive.

Watt of Badley, much exasperated, called on his comrades to throw him over the bridge on the head of the man below, "and thus," said he, grinning himself into better humour at his own joke, "if we do not kill two dogs with one stone, we shall at least fell two Scots with one."

The poor serf, driven to the last extremity, and quite aware that he could expect little leniency from the Southrons, put his back to the parapet, and shouted to his master.

"Ay, let him come," cried Watt; "it will save us the trouble of going to him, for we must teach him also how to behave to us. But, comrades, we

shall lose the jest if you cast him not over at once —up with him!"

They made a rush upon the man, one dropping before his cudgel, and the rest holding him fast; and, enraged by a resistance they were so little in the habit of meeting among the poor dispirited people, they were raising him, still struggling, over the parapet, to precipitate him into the stream below, when his master suddenly appeared among them, his features strongly excited, and his voice quivering, as he inquired what was the matter.

"Matter!" exclaimed Watt. "Matter, quotha! Seest not? A free-born Englishman struck by a Scotch slave! Over with him, still say I."

"Thou shalt not slay him, Southron," cried the other in a startling voice.

"Shall not! Hear ye, my mates? By St George, this is mutiny! Hark ye, young man, beware of your words, and eke of your actions."

They were still intent on throwing over the unfortunate serf, when his master sprang among them, and catching up their leader, who was a small man, as if he had been an infant, held him high in air

over the river. "Now, Southrons, stand back and release my follower, or by the might of God, this fellow goes down where he hangs!"

The Southrons started back in amazement at this sudden and energetic display of extraordinary strength; but, after a pause, recovering themselves, they advanced, sword in hand, on the daring Scot.

"For Christ's sake," said Watt, in a piteous tone, "assail him not, comrades! I am helpless as a babe in his hands."

"He tells you true," said the Scot; "go in peace, and let me go; I desire not to war with you."

"Why, then, let there be truce."

"Truce, truce," cried the other two; and Watt once more, to his great joy, stood on *terra firma;* but scarcely had his feet touched the ground, when one of his comrades, thinking that he was in safety, bestowed as piteful blow, inflicting a gaping wound, on the poor serf's side, and the rest again advanced to the attack.

Enraged by this treachery, the tall Scot seized

Watt as he was hastening to his friends, and instead of pitching him over the parapet, threw him, as if cast from a battering engine, among them, prostrating one of them, who lay with Watt on the ground apparently dead. The Scot then drew his whinger and attacked the remaining two, who did not stay for his onset; but, amazed and panic stricken by what they had seen, betook themselves to flight.

Their antagonist cast but one glance after them, and another on his prostrate foes, then turned to his follower, who, faint and bleeding, supported himself against the parapet of the bridge. His eye had followed his master through every movement, and as he approached him, it lighted up with a joyful expression.

"My poor Cormack," said the latter, as he proceeded to bind up his wound in the best manner he could, "thou hast had enough in thy day of Southron injustice. Cheer thee, my friend! do not droop —art athirst? I can bring water from the stream." And without pausing for answer he bounded down the bank, bonnet in hand, and returned instant-

ly with it half filled with water, which revived the sufferer immediately. He no sooner felt strengthened than he began to feel his master all over, asking many questions to ascertain if he had received any hurt. The other displayed towards him the same kindly feeling, carefully at times adjusting the rough bandage, partially displaced by motion, and talking to him in his own tongue in a soothing strain. At length he turned to his foemen, one of whom shewed some signs of life, but the other seemed to be gone for ever. By rubbing his wet bonnet over the face and neck of the former, he so far recovered him as to get him to sit upright against the parapet and to stare around, but he said nothing.

"An evil day I fear this is for both of us, my poor Cormack! How shall I get these Southron tyrants, who listen but to one side of the question, to believe the true nature of this unlucky affair? How convince mine uncle, who must be at hand now, that I am not the aggressor?"

He sat down in a desponding mood on a stone near Cormack, and many minutes had not passed

when, roused by the trampling of horses, he looked up and beheld a party advancing towards the bridge, armed cap-a-pie, and bearing on their pennon the well-known arms of Loudon. At their head rode the stately old chief of that house, who, casting a glance, first at the Scots on the bridge, in which there was a peculiar meaning, and then at the disabled Southrons—"How now," cried he, "what have we here?"

Watt of Badley had recovered his speech, and he, without the slightest hesitation, accused the Scots of maltreating him and his party; for he knew the stranger instantly.

"I was out with my comrades," said he, "by permission of the seneschal, and we were"—

"First tell me what thou art. By the sign on thy cap thou shouldst be of the Lord Percy's army."

"Even so, noble Lord Sheriff," said Watt, "we are archers of the Lord Governor's band in these parts, and we demand justice on this man, who hath overthrown and maltreated us, as your Lordship may see."

"Thou art far from garrison, good fellow."

"We had leave for recreation to travel the country, conditioned that we reported correctly what chanced on our way."

"Spies!" muttered the Sheriff to himself. "And now," continued he in a more stern voice, "fair sir, will it please thee to give thy account of this fine business?"

"It is true, my Lord," replied the young Scot, "that we two were wrongfully attacked by four Southrons, and we discomfited them."

"Four! I see but two."

"The others fled;" and he gave a correct and particular account of the whole affair—how he avoided a collision as long as it was possible, and how he was driven to resistance by their treacherous attack. What he said bore the stamp of truth, and there was a visible movement among the men-at-arms, expressive of this feeling.

"Archers," asked Sir Ranald Crawford; "may this be so?"

"It is false!" cried Watt. "We did but play with this wold man, when he felled to the earth one of our number like an ox, and we did then lay

hold to cast him over. 'Mass, an' Scots strike Englishmen after this fashion, where be our discipline? And this tall fellow comes me forth from the river, and catches me up like a piece of wood, and hurls me at my comrades; and so"— Feeling ashamed at the implied issue of four being defeated by one, he paused abruptly.

"And so this malignant and most foolish Scot had the temerity to assail four archers of Lord Percy's band, and to discomfit them. In faith, it was an evil deed, and shall be inquired into. Meanwhile, fitting care must be had of thee and thy comrade, if he be not past remeid." Then calling a squire, he ordered him to convey them to Galston Castle, with a request that they might be well tended by its lord, that being the nearest place where such good attendance could be obtained.— "For you, young sir, you wend with me; take thee to thy hobler; and one of you must have this wounded serf on his crupper. Canst thou ride so, poor fellow?"

"Yea, my Lord," said Cormack, "I am better."

"Then take them as prisoners, caught redhand

by the Sheriff, to our own strength of Loudon." So saying, he turned slowly away, while the squire and two yeomen were preparing to obey his orders, and the rest of the band closed in round the captives, placing Cormack behind a yeoman of their number.

Sir Ranald spoke not until the Southrons were on the way to Galston, when he gave the word to set on. A look of intelligence went round among the men-at-arms, who were all gentlemen of his own blood, frequently, throughout the proceedings which have just been narrated, and they were no sooner fairly on their journey than whispered greetings passed between them and the stranger, which were soon silenced, however, when their old Chieftain, who rode on before, stopped abruptly, and addressed him.

"Now, William Wallace," said he, with an expression of countenance in which nature struggled sadly with an assumed dignity of demeanour —

"Nay, uncle," cried the young man earnestly, "as God shall judge me, my tale is sooth."

"I believe thy tale," said the Sheriff, gravely.

"Do not imagine I would suppose thee to be capable of a gross falsehood. Seest thou, Will of Drongan, how imprudent and thoughtless this kinsman of ours will ever be? What, in the fiend's name, threw thee in the way of these men? What hadst thou to do there?"

"Nay, my Lord, do him justice; and rather ask what in the devil's name brought these cowardly espials so near the castle of Ayrshire's Sheriff," replied the one he addressed.

"For me," replied Wallace, "I can easily tell what brought me so near the way side—it was even to apprise mine honoured uncle, ere he reach Loudon, that an armed band hath been prowling and prancing within his bounds this live-long day from three of the morn."

"Sayest thou in my bounds! Broken men, doubtless, and thieves they must be. Bore they no pennon?"

"That of a knight, men say, under the Red Cross of England."

"How! it is impossible. The Lord Governor dare not do me this injury!"

Sir Ranald pulled up his horse abruptly, and shewed considerable agitation on hearing this news. "Couldst thou learn no more, fair nephew?"

"Nothing. It was about noon the seneschal sent this intelligence to Riccarton. He hath placed careful espial on them, and doubtless news will soon be obtained."

"Two of you prick on before, look sharply and carefully round, and at sight of any armed men, return instantly," said the Sheriff; and at the word two men-at-arms galloped off in front.

They were now within a short distance of Loudon Castle, and on the road by which any men from the garrison must return to Ayr. The day was waning fast also; and Sir Ranald had just satisfied himself that he would likely fall in with these intruders, whoever they might be, when the horsemen returned on the gallop, and reported a plump of spears advancing within half a mile; and in a few minutes a turn of the road shewed the whole party, but no banner of any sort was displayed by them. As the two bands approached each other,

the men-at-arms carefully closed their visors, and the yeomen looked to their bows.

"They halt," said Sir Ranald; "go forward, William of Drongan. Greet them fairly, and courteously inquire who they be who have honoured Loudon by their presence."

Drongan's sarcastic countenance, as he delivered the message, probably turned the really courteously meant greeting into a sneering inquiry as to what they were doing there—at least the reply of the person who advanced to meet him, arrayed in the helmet and spurs of a knight, would imply that it was not well received.

"Who are we? Doth the Lord of Loudon wish to know? Then tell him we are the men of King Edward, lawful sovereign of England, Ireland, and Scotland (emphasizing the last word), and we have been discharging our duty, by seizing some refractory subjects, whose tongues have been too frankly telling their minds in this neighbourhood. Perhaps the Sheriff may assist in judging and punishing the malapert knaves," added he with a sneer.

"You are here, Sir Knight," answered Drongan,

" on the lands, and within the jurisdiction of a free baron, and one who, moreover, is not only a loyal subject, but in high authority under the King. Surely, then, it is but scant courtesy to deny to my lord the right of judging his own vassals and tenants; and if you have seized and are carrying off as captives some of them, it were vain to deny that you are doing an act of great discourtesy."

" Thy message is done, Sir Squire," replied the Southron, with a lofty look; " I shall talk with thy Lord."

Old Drongan cast a scowl of hatred on the group, and turned, without the slightest gesture of courtesy, to deliver the words of the stranger to his Chief.

The strange knight instinctively drew up his form with hauteur, as he perceived the old Baron put his horse in motion to approach him; but the manners of the times did not permit of disrespect from youth to age, and the Southron felt himself obliged, however disinclined, to meet him.

" Sir Knight," began the Sheriff, " I greet thee

well; the officer of King Edward is welcome within my bounds."

"I salute you, my Lord of Loudon; and I pray you to bear in mind that I seek no matter of dispute between us; but, peradventure, what hath chanced may be displeasing to you, as it hath been to your follower; true it is, I have, in my duty, taken traitors to King Edward within your barony, and by the special command of the Governor."

The old man bent his head slightly, as if bowing to the authority just named, but his face was flushed, and his eye flashing.

"Yet methinks," said he, "the Lord Governor hath but little faith in me to dispatch a force for this purpose, without speaking of it, seeing it was but yester morn I saw his Lordship, and that his young knight is to do what I myself should have done, both as Sheriff and liegeman to the King."

"But, perchance, noble Sheriff, the Lord Governor might think the task disagreeable to you," replied the Southron, with a glance to a follower near,

which plainly said, I will play him a little, and tickle this polite but pertinacious old baron.

The Sheriff was not so blind. "I pray thee let me see those prisoners, that I may know what men of mine have so far forgotten their duty."

"Nay," quoth the Knight, taken rather by surprise, "this may exceed my warrant."

In the mean time, the two bands had approached gradually so near to each other, that this conversation between the leaders was overheard by many in both, and among the rest by young Wallace, who, unarmed as he was, and indifferently mounted, seemed a stranger in the Loudon train.

As the different bands came nearer to each other, the excitement increased, and nearly the whole of the Southrons, in eager anticipatiou of a fray, had left the rear, and the care of the prisoners, to occupy a position better calculated to support their party. The Scots, under similar circumstances, could not now recollect that their kinsman was in a sort of nominal captivity, and thus Wallace passed unheeded to the rear of the

Southrons, where he found a few men, and to his surprise a woman, mounted each behind a horseman, and firmly secured to him. One of the former he recognised as a yeoman of considerable substance on the estate, who was highly esteemed by Sir Ranald. Wallace returned immediately to his uncle, who was still in conversation with the English Knight, and informed him of what he had seen. Greatly astonished, and somewhat wroth, was the Sheriff, when he again accosted the Southron.

"Fair Sir," said he. "I wish, in all courtesy, to conduct our discussion, but I learn there is a woman among the captives; and, certes, it is known to you that women are not to be made prisoners for treason. It were shame to chivalry should such practice hold."

"How!" cried the other, "I marvel to hear the wise Sheriff say so; for many men hold them to be at the bottom of all treason."

"Thy wit, young man, may not pass with me. Prythee, in one word, let me see this woman, otherwise I must pray that thou shalt release her."

"That may not be. I shall let no man meddle

with gear intrusted to me by my liege; not even the Sheriff of Ayr."

As he said this, there was a toss of the head, and an expansion of the nostril, which did not escape the notice of Sir Ranald's men, and a movement occurred among them which was instantly checked by him.

"Stand fast, Crawfords," cried he—his form more erect and his mien more animated at the apparently near approach of battle. "Stir not! And thou, Childe of Torringan! keep thy lance erect, or, by the soul of Thorlongus, thou shalt feel the weight of mine!" Then in a lower tone to Drongan,—"Keep them steady, Will; shew a good front to these loons, while I talk to their captain." He returned to the Southron, and the rebuked one, a mere youth, who, in the ardour of the moment, had couched his lance, sat, like all the rest, as if immoveable.

"Another sharp word from yon ill-favoured fellow," thought Drongan, who knew his old Chief well, "and we shall be on them like greyhounds from the slip."

The force of the English might numerically be the same as that of the Scots, but they were all men-at-arms; while half of the other party were mounted yeomen, who had instructions, in affairs of this sort, not to come to close battle, but to take advantage of the ground, and ply their bows on the flanks as well as front of the enemy. They wore only jacks and iron head-pieces, and of course could not maintain an equal fight with men cased in armour. Nevertheless they were, like the other half of his train, picked men, and Sir Ranald had no fears of the issue, if nothing could avert a skirmish.

On rejoining, to renew his conference with the Southron leader, a voice, which he recognised instantly, exclaimed from their rear, "Here is rank villany, my lord of Loudon. Villany! men and maidens reft from home without cause told."

These words immediately put to flight the stately and ceremonious courtesy which the old Sheriff had hitherto maintained towards his opponent. Turning fiercely to the latter, who observed a sullen doggedness of demeanour—

"Thou hast maltreated my men," said he, sternly, "mayhap harried my lands, and wilt not listen to my words. Now, shew me the warrant of the Governor, his signet, or any token that can empower thee to do this deed; and tell me why thy men are ranged under no pennon, whilst thou hast golden spurs on thy heels. Explain these things, or, by our Lady of Kyle! thou shalt know there is a Sheriff to do justice, and a Lord of Loudon to avenge his own wrongs; even thy name thou hast not told."

"My name," said he, "is Arthur Heselrig, and I am of Lord Percy's household, lately arrived from Northumberland. So much I tell the Sheriff, as due, less to him than myself; for the rest, I shew my warrant to no Scot that lives; and for marching without a pennon, why it is my humour. You have my answer."

Wallace had watched the proceedings with intense interest. Knowing the sound judgment and great caution of his uncle, he had no fears, until he saw that his anger was fairly roused; then he thought it time that he should give him a practical

lesson, who had so often lectured his nephew on the propriety of forbearance with the English; for he knew that no youth could be more impetuous than the old man in his wrath, and he knew also that his life and lands might be at hazard on the present occasion. His plan was instantly formed. He had been going backward and forward so frequently during the parley, that the men in charge of the prisoners scarcely noticed him, so eagerly did they watch the proceedings in front. Drawing a small dagger, he contrived gradually to insinuate himself among the Southrons and their captives, and, watching his opportunity, to sever the bonds that fastened the latter to the former—his finger on his lip was sufficient hint to the prisoners to remain silent and motionless. There was now a considerable distance, perhaps a hundred paces, between them and their friends. Suddenly, Wallace gave the word and the example by seizing at once the man who had charge of the female, and pulling him to the ground, while she took his place in the saddle without a moment's pause. Now came the difficult part of the manœuvre. Wallace

had purposely dragged the man down so forcibly that he lay stunned and motionless. He then pushed on to assist his countrymen, who at the same moment with himself hurled with all their strength each the man before him to the ground, but with different success. Two or three of the Southrons gained their feet, and drew their swords to attack them, but Wallace was soon among them with his whinger, and the Scots got instantly clear off. "Now," cried he, "let every man, with what speed he may, find his own way home, for we must not ride in company."

The whole passed so quickly, that the liberated Scots were fairly entered into the intricacies of the surrounding wood, ere their enemies took the alarm. There was a rising ground between, which partly obscured the proceedings, and the whole energies of all were concentrated on what they believed to be an approaching combat. The men of Loudon knew the ground, and had no difficulty in finding their way. Meanwhile the 'Squire of the English band, an elderly man, who had been scanning attentively the opposing force, anxiously

addressed his leader,—"I pray you, Sir Arthur, be not offended that I give unasked counsel in this matter. I fear me the old Sheriff hath the right, but that is less than the chance of discomfiture."

"Discomfiture!" said Heselrig scornfully. "We double their number, for I count the rascal yeomen as nothing."

"Then, will it please you, regard those men-at-arms: they are known to be of the flower of Westland chivalry. Their very attitude, still as it is, doth speak of desperate daring; and their Spanish barbs, well trained like themselves, seem to shoot living fire from their motionless eyeballs."

"Pshaw!" replied the Knight impatiently; "dost think to scare me with their prowess? Are our men untried?"

"Nay, then," said the Squire, "what shall we gain by victory? We risk good fame in a bad cause, and the shame of defeat besides, to obtain nothing."

"What wouldst thou have me do?" exclaimed

Heselrig. "Submit to this man, and yield my captives? By St Dunstan, thou art over bold to propose it!"

"The maiden only; that will suffice."

"I will not, by Heaven!" persisted the Knight, starting away. "Ho, St George for merry England!"—but ere he could give the word, a sound fell on his ear that completely turned the current of his ideas.

"The prisoners escape—they are off into the wood!"

"Chase—chase!" cried the 'Squire hastily.

"Bring them back on your lives," exclaimed Heselrig.

This hastily-uttered exclamation, taken advantage of by the wary 'Squire, drew off more than half his band; and Heselrig, furious at the risk of losing the prize, couched his lance. "Old traitor," cried he, "thou shalt abye it." The Sheriff, with an air of dignity, waved his hand, as if to prevent him, but the Southron still keeping his attitude of attack, Drongan lowered the point of his weapon, and instantly the lance of every Craw-

ford was laid in rest. It had been Heselrig's last if he had ran that course.

"Hold! madman," cried the Sheriff. "I command you all, of both sides, to forbear this idle strife; and it is perhaps well for you, Sir Arthur of Heselrig, since so thou art named, that I can with honour now leave thee unassailed. Thou art completely in my power. Raise thy lance-point," continued he more sternly, "or thou art but a dead man."

"It is true, by Heaven," muttered Heselrig, casting a glance round and seeing how badly he was supported, then throwing his spear away in sheer vexation. Sir Ranald approached him with a smoother brow, and he spoke in a milder tone when he again addressed him.

"Young man, thou hast committed an insult and an outrage on one who is older likely than thy father, if thou hast one. This I pass lightly, seeing thou now unarmed and at my mercy; but if what thou hast done doth reach the ears of the Lord Governor, thou mayest have a worse matter,

and a severer judge to answer. Keep thy own counsel; with me this affair endeth here."

"It is nobly spoken," said Heselrig, surprised out of his usual sullenness of deportment.

"Thou mayest recal thy parties; they will not succeed."

So saying, the stately old man saluted the Knight courteously, and gave the signal to his band to proceed, as if nothing had happened,—heedless alike of the angry and disappointed looks among them, and the expression of surprise that dwelt on the countenance of Heselrig.

Each horse of his train, when set in motion, made a bound and a caracol, as if indemnifying itself for the exercise it had lost; and, ere the party was fairly on the road, the trumpet of Heselrig sounded a recal, much to the relief of the Sheriff, for he was by no means without apprehension that the captives would be overtaken, seeing the start was so short. To be sure, the wood was tangled, and the paths known to them only.

"Thou seest, Will," said he to his principal esquire, Drongan, "if they recovered our folks

nothing but a tuilzie would save our credit, and do the poor people right. Now neither is necessary; and besides, if I had not spoken kindly to that unknightly Knight, he would have told the business in his own way to the Governor; and with this new bruilzie of William on the bridge, by my faith, the worst would be soon believed of us all; so, in regard to Heselrig, thou wilt see, bygones had better be bygones."

"You are right, doubtless, Sir Ranald; in fact, I see you are; but it grieved us sadly to let the lurdane off unscaithed."

"Thou dost speak like a hot-headed youth, Will of Drongan; that speech had been well from the springald of Torringan, but is all unlike thee. Thou knowest we are in a perilous position—suspected, watched, and pointed out as disaffected, we cannot be too careful. Certes, I do not expect to keep long my present office, hereditary though it be, and shorn of its rights and privileges by this Governor, who hath taken on himself half my duties and my powers. To-morrow, I must wend my way again to the Lord Percy, to smooth over

this matter of my nephew, who, I see, is really not to be blamed; but it will be a hard task to get it credited. What hath become of him? Where is he?" enquired the Sheriff, hastily.

"Gone with Simon of Hilton," replied the nearest man-at-arms. "The wounded serf saw him when they escaped."

"I see it all," exclaimed the Sheriff; "the blessing of Heaven is on him! He hath saved us from a great misfortune. That youth is far beyond all men of twice his years in wisdom—his like is not!"

CHAPTER II.

Thus lived the Scots in threllage,
Both sympill and of hie parage;
And of gret lords some thae slwe,
And sum they hangit, sum thae drewe;
And sum they put in hard preson;
Bot ony laws or encheson.
* * *
His fadder was a manlie Knicht,
His modyere was a ladie bricht.

Blind Harry.

On the following day the old Baron of Loudon went with his usual retinue to the Lord Governor, in order to explain the unfortunate rencounter of his nephew with the archers; and, if it should be necessary, to vindicate his conduct in regard to the affair with Heselrig. In his absence let us give some account of him and his household.

Sir Ranald Crawford was in his sixty-fifth year, but still stout and hale, with a florid complexion,

and hair like the snow of Arran. As a baron of large possessions, the head of a powerful clan, and hereditary Sheriff, he was of high rank and great influence in the country. The latter office had, however, as he himself insinuated, been sadly reduced since the English got possession of his district. Like other men of note, nevertheless, he found it necessary to suit his high spirit to the times, and conform to the saw, "what cannot be cured must be endured." The grinding exactions of the new government, and the insolence of its underlings, often drove him to the very verge of violent remonstrance, which would have, in all probability, resulted in his ruin. He considered the office of Sheriff as identified with himself and his lands, and no more dreamt of giving up one than the other, until it had been told him that he only held it during the pleasure of the Governor. This was precisely a surprise as great as if he had been told that his father's estate was wanted for a dependant of the Lord Percy. Incidents of daily occurrence, arising out of disputes between the invaders and his countrymen, in which, right or

wrong, the former expected his favour, increased his disgust; and he would gladly have been relieved of the judicial power he enjoyed, if he thought he could be so with honour, for the political ascendency, contingent on his place, had long passed to King Edward's representative.

His desire was to live among his own people, and he was so much beloved by the family of which he was the head, that although many members of it were themselves lesser barons of considerable property, they willingly did the suit and service of retainers, or rather followed the Celtic practice of devoting themselves to their Chief in all things. Hence, in his train were the eldest sons of the principal families of the clan, Drongan being the only proprietor, who, from long habit and early intimacy with Sir Ranald, preferred being with him constantly, to living on his own estate. There were others of the name, whose lands held of subjects superior, to whom, in accordance with feudal law, they owed military service, but who, nevertheless, on all occasions of emergency, ranged themselves under the banner of Loudon; thus discharg-

ing a duty both to their feudal lord and the head of their blood, which was occasionally onerous and severe; but the latter claim was generally held paramount, if both the Chiefs required their services at the same time. It was besides an excellent school for youths of good birth,—the Sheriff's bands having been long proverbial for their prowess and military excellence in all essential points. The nature of his office required that he should have such men about his person; and it was his pride and his pleasure to hear the praises of the heads of his own tribe, with whom he was surrounded. They were thus, though under strict discipline, like the sons of the old Chief; and those who were old enough, were confidential friends and advisers, constituting a sort of council, when he felt himself under any difficulty.

He had taken the oath of allegiance to Edward, when all hope of successful resistance was lost, like other leading men, who saw no other means of saving their families from total ruin, but submission to the overwhelming torrent of armed warriors, which the self-aggrandising policy of that sagacious but

cruel and unscrupulous monarch had poured into his unhappy country. But like the rest of his countrymen, Sir Ranald Crawford keenly felt his injuries, and ardently longed for the time when the galling yoke could be thrown off. Hitherto all attempts to remove it had only ended in increasing its weight. The food of the inhabitants was devoured by their enemies; and it was only when his soldiers themselves began to suffer from famine, that the invading tyrant recognised the want and starvation which decimated the wretched objects of his oppression, and sent supplies, less to relieve them, than the instruments by which he maintained his grinding power over them.

The better classes were oppressed by taxation, and every sort of exaction which the necessities of his army, or the rapacity of his officers, suggested. Although there were many of the latter, perhaps a majority, who revolted from the cruel policy they were called on to carry out, the system established by their King was the result of deliberate calculation, and imposed as best adapted to break that spirit of independence which he had expe-

rienced among the Scots; and consequently those who departed from it, either in the letter or spirit, were not considered faithful subjects, and were soon singled out and marked by the royal displeasure. It would seem that the opposition which Edward met with in Scotland only riveted his energies more firmly and zealously to the permanent conquest of that country; and that, as the time passed on without his object being completely attained, his mind acquired that bent which became identified with the very nature of the man, and the loss of Scotland then appeared to him in the same light as the loss of part of England. Hence his fury at the opposition offered incidentally by one party or other, who attempted to free themselves from his oppressive measures, and the relentless cruelty with which he punished those patriots as rebels who fell into his hands. The directions he gave regarding the inscription for the tomb, where his bones were to be buried after travelling with the army, then on its way to invade Scotland, shews clearly the savage animosity of his disposition towards that hapless country.

That his actions might be justified on the broad grounds of philanthropy, and the general good of the island of Britain, inasmuch as they tended to unite, in one common interest, two nations of the same blood, who were now, from conflicting interests, opposed to each other, is a question apart from what we are now considering. A conquered country, joined to another by force of arms and not of free will, and under the guarantee of treaties, is not likely to be at accord with that which has forced the junction on it, and Ireland, even at that time, furnished an illustration of this fact. But when the object was self-aggrandisement, as in King Edward's case it clearly was, and when the interests of the subdued territory were not taken into consideration, saving in so far as doing so might promote his own views, it cannot be denied that it was merely one of those attempts, too common in the middle ages, to bend the weak to the will and purposes of the strong.

In the conquest of Wales, and the happily abortive but strenuously followed up resolution to annex Scotland to England, we see nothing but the same

lust of dominion, which, in the person of Edward's ancestor, converted a feudatory duke into a powerful and independent King, and bent a numerous and free people to the yoke of comparatively few foreigners. It was this numerical superiority, as well as the larger extent of territory, which saved England from the fate of Ireland, and made the conquest rather a change of rulers than of the laws and customs of the people.

Edward was fond of saying that he was "King of the Saxons and Normans," and entitled to hold sway wherever, within the seas of Britain, those races were found—a doctrine savouring rather of patriarchal than feudal rule—but one which suited his purpose better, perhaps, than any other; for the leading nobles of Scotland were also subjects of the English crown, and unquestionably their position, as owing allegiance to both kings, was anomalous and precarious in the extreme; for, let them take either side, in a war between the two countries, they were sure to incur the risk of losing the possessions they held in that country which they had resolved to oppose themselves to. Hence

the apparent facility with which Edward, as the stronger, gained over the Barons of Scotland to sign the famous bond of allegiance, called Ragman's Roll. The chief Scottish Barons of that age were almost all of Norman or Flemish descent. A perusal of the names contained in the list just mentioned will satisfy any one of this.

Among the smaller barons or gentry, many were of Celtic or Saxon origin; but it is difficult now to ascertain what names belong to the one and what to the other; for, when sirnames came into general use, about the period of which we are treating, those of native or Saxon blood, who possessed lands, adopted the Norman practice of assuming for their family names those of their estates respectively. Hence the difficulty of tracing to the root any family beyond the thirteenth century, unless it happens to be prominently mentioned in old charters. In them, too, we find men of high rank merely designed (if they had no sirname) by their countries; such as Flandrenses, or Flammaticus, or Wallensis. The earlier public writs of the Scottish Kings shew, in their address, the mixed

nature of the population,—This being, "to all true men, whether Scottish or Irish (Erse), French or English." The latter constituting the bulk of the population, which, from the days of Malcolm Canmore, and under the encouragement of succeeding princes, especially David the First, poured into every part of Scotland, displacing the thin and scattered aboriginal people, whose pastoral habits, and aversion to settled industry, unfitted them for being active instruments in introducing those improvements, which the sagacious David saw were essential to the well-being of his country. The extent of land granted by that Prince to Saxons and Normans, who removed with their servants and slaves, and sometimes a host of adventurers besides, is astonishing. From it we are led to believe, that most of the land, south of the Forth and Clyde, belonged to the Crown, including the Scottish territories in England, in the homage for which the monarchs of the latter found their excuse for claiming the fealty of Scotland.

It is probable that the Celtic landholders, previous to the eleventh century, had no well defined

right to their estates; and, before that era, it is certain that, save in the Lothians, the population of the whole country was purely Celtic; and, being given to hunting and pastoral pursuits, it is not perhaps too much to assume, that each district was possessed (as in the Highlands at a later period) by a separate tribe, to whom the land was in common, the Chief merely being considered a sort of nominal proprietor of the whole, and holding it for the beneficial use of his clan. It would seem, then, that when the Scottish Kings resolved to introduce a more laborious people into the low country, they granted such districts to southern strangers, merely giving the principal men of the original possessors, each a suitable portion, and transferring the bulk of the tribe along with the land, as slaves, very nearly in the same manner as the Spaniards appropriated to each other the Indians of the American continent some centuries later, and as the Saxons had previously done in England with the conquered British. In the progress of time the serfs, escaping from a state of bondage to which they were unaccustomed, and

many of their chiefs, also, disliking the society of strangers, who affected to despise them as an inferior people, sought the more remote districts of the country, which were still unexplored by Gothic enterprise; and the Highlands, or Isles, eventually became in Scotland precisely what Wales was in England, the refuge and stronghold of the ancient British race.

That a large proportion both of leading men and serfs remained in the low countries, and became amalgamated with the strangers, losing their language and their identity as a different race, gradually and imperceptibly, among the Saxons by whom they were surrounded, is shewn by the characteristic features which their descendants possess, and which differ considerably from those of their English neighbours. In the ancient kingdom of Strathclyde, comprehending all the country between Clyde and Solway, and which continued to be independent till the tenth century, the distinguishing features of the original inhabitants were perhaps more strongly marked during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, than in districts

even in the neighbourhood of the Highlands. The Erse language was spoken in Ayrshire in the seventeenth century.

No charters having been granted in Scotland during the Celtic period of her history, we cannot say positively that slavery did not exist among the tribes previous to the reign of the third Malcolm; but we know that such a state of society is decidedly against the principle on which patriarchal government is based, and according to which the Chief rules, as representing the common ancestor of the whole clan, the members of which, however, low in wealth, being of his own blood and race, are equally noble and free with himself. We observe, however, soon after the Norman conquest of England, when the Saxons began to settle, or colonize, as Chalmers styles it, the South of Scotland, and to spread gradually over the whole of it, that serfs are recognised under the denomination of "natives" in the earliest charters. The very phrase would imply that, in some districts at least, the natives were not only the slaves of the strangers, but the only race held in slavery by them at that

time; and that the words "native" and "serf" were in such places synonymous. It is known that the Saxons in England, from an early period of their settlement there, not only held the lower classes of their countrymen in bondage, but carried on a considerable export trade in slaves to the continent, and even to Ireland. There can be little doubt, therefore, that they introduced the custom into the North; and accordingly we find in charters of a later date, the expression changed from *cum omnibus nativis*, to *cum omnibus hominibus*, when the Saxon bondsmen increased in number so much as to equal or exceed the native serfs, by importations from the South.

We know from authentic history, that the introduction by King Malcolm the Third of English settlers and Norman adventurers, produced serious disunion among the Scots, and that the dislike of the aboriginal people to their manners and customs rose to such a height in the subsequent reign of Edgar, that the latter expelled all Southrons from his country. But the tide of immigration, thus checked, acquired additional force subsequent-

ly, restoring those who had been driven out of their possessions, and carrying along with it, under more auspicious sovereigns, a continually increasing influx of people from the South, who were destined to effect in Scotland what their ancestors had accomplished in England eight centuries earlier, though not without a blending of the new and old races, which did not take place in the southern part of the island.

The preceding observations seem necessary to elucidate some incidents in the course of our tale, and some traits in the leading characters of it.

The family of Wallace seems to have been numerous and of considerable rank in the 12th and 13th centuries. The members of it appear in the Ragman Roll, and in many charters of that period, under the various designations of "Le Waleis," "Walense," or when Latinized, "Wallensis." "Ricardus Wallensis" was an extensive proprietor of Kyle; and several others, who are similarly denominated, appear as witnesses to royal and other charters. It is generally believed in the West of Scotland that they descended from the ancient in-

habitants of Valentia, Regnum Cumbrense, or Strathclyde, as the territory was variously designed by the Romans first, and afterwards by Saxons and Britons. Whether the term Wallensis has been drawn from the more ancient denomination given to that division of the country when it was a Roman province, or has been adopted by the Saxons, as significant in their language of the position in which the Britons stood to them as strangers, may be difficult to determine. There seems to be little doubt, however, that the word was used originally to denote the country and not the family of the individual, just as others, who had yet no family name, were distinguished from their neighbours. Richard the Wallensian, and Theobald the Fleming, had the distinguishing epithet applied to them for the same reason. The latter adopted the name of his barony, and became Douglas; the former adhered to that of his country, in the same manner as the ancestor of the Wigton family chose to be known, and his posterity also, by the sirname of Fleming.

William Wallace was the second son of Sir Malcolm of Elderslie and Auchinbothey, in Ren-

frewshire. His earlier years had been passed at home; but as he grew to manhood, his principal residence was at his uncle's castle of Riccarton, in Ayrshire. Born to no fortune but that of every younger son of a good family, which in those days was generally a sword and a position in front of the paternal band, he had nevertheless been better educated than the sons of lesser barons generally were at that period. The teacher of Malcolm's sons was a cousin of his own, who had been born to higher fortunes, and whose family had been ruined by the change in the population. He was known by the designation of Father Angus, he being a priest who lived in quality of chaplain, tutor, or hanger on, in the household of his kinsman. To this man's dislike of the strangers, who during the preceding century had encroached so much on the liberties and possessions of the ancient inhabitants, much of the hostility which William exhibited at a very early period of his life, to the English, was owing; and it grew with his growth until it broke out when he was a mere boy at Dundee, where he killed a youth of high connexions in a fray, arising

out of some insult thrown out by the latter on the Scots. This incident, which at the time caused much excitement among the Southrons, was, however, after a little while, forgotten in the stirring events of the period, especially as the offender withdrew himself from the spot, and lived in seclusion at Riccarton. It had the effect of confirming that hatred of oppression and love of liberty which had been so sedulously implanted in his mind from childhood, and of fixing his attention on the actions, general and individual, of his country's enemies. Not long afterwards, too, an occurrence of a different nature made a lasting impression on him.

That love of action which distinguished him at all times, found a proper object in subduing and subjecting to the power of man the wild horses that ranged the forests of Riccarton, the breeding and rearing of which constituted with his uncle, in common with Scottish landholders in general of that age, a principal source of revenue. In following this pursuit, he met with a kindred spirit in Cormack, the son of Gilcolumb, the chief keeper of the mares and their colts which roamed the wide woods

of Riccarton. Wallace was delighted with the courage and dexterity of the youthful serf, who manifested on the other hand a great fondness for his young master; and they continued to follow their sport with unremitting assiduity, but with such reckless impetuosity, that Gilcolumb was under the necessity of suggesting to his Lord some restraint on the youths.—"For," said he, "they will be maimed or killed against the trees, seeing that they pause not, especially young Master, to back the wildest three-year-old for the first time, and start him off with but a hair tether for bridle; and my Lord may lose both a nephew and a serf."

"Truly, friend Gilcolumb," replied old Riccarton, "thou art careful of my property and my blood; natheless, it is better that William's activity and energy vent themselves on my colts than on the Southrons in these perilous times; and thou knowest he is prone also to that sport; but we shall counsel him, and do thou rule thy son."

"Surely! but Heaven forefend that I should oppose me to the will of the 'Squire. Young though he be, there are few who like to stand in his way."

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" Thou sayest truly ; he hath the soul to dare, and the body to perform aught," replied Riccarton, with a smile ; " but he is ever kindly to his countrymen and loving to his friends." " No one can say aught else ; but there seemeth to me somewhat in his face that doth say to other men, ' I will be obeyed,' just as if he had been made to rule over them ; and although he hath never yet spoken to me, save words of kindness, and I am not fearful generally, I would not for any thing I know cross him in aught."

" Certainly," thought Riccarton to himself, as he glanced at the daring and rather savage aspect of his serf, " the power he holdeth over thee sheweth that he is not an ordinary youth."

One day, it chanced that Wallace was occupied with his favourite amusement in a part of the forest through which the highway passed, when a party from the garrison at Ayr appeared on the road. He and Cormack had caught, and were just in the act of preparing to mount, a couple of very beautiful young animals, whose symmetry instantly arrested the attention of the Southrons, to one of whom, on

demanding to know the price of them, Wallace replied that they belonged to the Lord of the land, and were not to be sold.

The leader of the party, at these words, dismounted, and giving his horse to an attendant, walked directly up to that which Wallace held by the rude halter that he had put on it. "Know, Scot," said he, "that when an Englishman wanteth aught in this country, he doth not ask if it be for sale, but what is the price. Wilt not tell?"

"Surely you will not take what is another man's, he unasked!"

Without deigning to reply, the Southron, who was looking with increased admiration at the horse, seized the halter, and Wallace, enraged at his want of courtesy as he was, yet warned him against mounting with the long spurs he wore.

"He is untamed, I tell thee!" cried he.

"Thou art malapert," said the other, as he vaulted on the bare back of the animal, and, in doing so, pricked him smartly. The wild creature bolted off like an arrow, and before going a hundred paces, brought his rider's head in contact with a

bough which crossed the path he took, and which sent him lifeless to the ground.

It happened that Gilcolumb arrived on the spot just as the English had raised their leader, and discovered that he was no more. The herdsman, whose countenance wore a scowl of deep meaning, and whose eyes regarded rather the young horse, which had run against a tree, and been dashed to the ground, irremediably disabled, than the slain man, attracted the attention of the strangers, one of whom exclaimed in wrath, "Seest thou, slave, what hath been done by thy folks?"—aiming at the same time a blow at the man's head with the butt of his spear, while the rest crowded round. Gilcolumb's hand sought the hilt of his woodsman's knife, as he stepped aside to avoid the blow.

"Impudent knave!" cried another of the party on seeing this action: and, letting his spear fall down by his side, without another word, transfixed the unfortunate herdsman. The whole party then, without listening a moment to the deep and menacing exclamations of Wallace, or the wild lamenta-

tion of the son, scampered off on their route, with the body of their countryman.

This event not only impressed Wallace more deeply than ever with the wrongs of his country, but increased his kindly feeling towards Cormack, and the class to which he belonged,—a death among whom could be accomplished with as little consideration, and with as much impunity, as that of any other valuable domestic animal. The Lord was paid for the loss he sustained generally, in cases of slave homicide, and that was sufficient atonement—always provided there was no slight of, or insult to, the authority of the owner; for although the latter might be indifferent to the fate of a poor wretch whom he scarcely knew as an appendage of his domain, he could by no means put up with the affront implied in an open assault on one under his protection, and in this fact lay the chief security of the serf from ill-usage by strangers. The Southrons, however, at the present period, were exceptions to the rule, and whatever they did must be endured,—appeals to the higher authorities being supported only by Scottish evi-

dence, which could not carry weight against English testimony, however incorrect.

The condition of this numerous class—the lowest step in the social ladder—occupied the mind of Wallace ever after that transaction; and the knowledge of his country which he had acquired, and of its later history, enabled him to draw a conclusion in favour of the serfs, which all the Saxon blood he inherited from a series of Gothic grandmothers, could not counteract or remove.

CHAPTER III.

Come hither! hither, my stout yeoman!

BYRON.

ON the day after Sir Ranald's journey to the Castle of Ayr, he held a long and secret conference with William of Drongan, and a few more experienced persons of his kindred, on the subject of his visit to the Governor.

"Fortunately," said he, "I was, as I expected, the first to inform the Governor of this unlucky affair—those two archers being still at Galston, if they be in life, which I doubt of one at least —and the Lord Percy being uncommonly well pleased, my story passed with him tolerably; nathe-less, it was not difficult to see there was a cloud on his brow, and at the last he told me plainly that

there were many things against this nephew of mine, 'of which,' quoth he, 'I am avised the Sheriff knoweth naught. But it is right that he should be kept out of men's sight, and specially away from Englishmen, lest more mischief arise.' I could not but agree with this, which is just my own opinion. 'Then,' said the Governor, 'here is what seemeth meet to me:—The hills between Cumnock and Galloway have lately become the resort of broken men and thieves, who plunder the loyal subjects in their neighbourhood of goods and gear, slaying those who resist; and this hath grown lately to such height, that it became necessary to intimate to Earl March, who is Lord of Cumnock, that he must garrison and fortify his castle there; or submit to have his vassals and tenants despoiled by these wild Scots; upon which the noble Earl hath entreated his Highness to send some men, of whose good conduct he is well assured, to keep his Castle of Cumnock, and maintain order in these parts, which petition the King hath remitted to me, saying withal, that the men of Cospatrick are much engaged in other quarters in his

Highness' service. Wherefore, it doth seem meet and proper, that a man of noble condition, and also hereditary ruler, such as the High Sheriff, should now carry out the royal order; and I was about to send a special messenger to Loudon, when thou didst come so opportunely. Now this young man thou mayest take to Cumnock, where he will find occupation of a more useful sort and safer, than those brawls in which he is too often engaged.'"

"O, no man," continued Sir Ranald, "is more courteous than the proud Lord, as men style him, when he is politic also; now, kinsmen, I must obey him—must garrison this stronghold of Cospatrick for a space; but what think ye may be the object? Plenty there are and to spare, in this shire, of King Edward's men; it is no lack of Southrons which hath dictated this measure."

"Why," said Crawfurdland, "doubtless he would have these troubles suppressed, without using the forces of the King; he would let the Scottish dogs worry each other."

"Or he would have the district around Loudon

cleared of some Crawfurds, who, he doth fear, hatch treason there," said Drongan, " under the suggestions of William Wallace, as his faithful Arthur of Heselrig doubtless hath reported."

" I think he hath not, for his own sake; for no word was spoken concerning it," said Sir Ranald. " It boots not what his motive be, my duty is obedience," continued he, shrugging his shoulders. " We must raise our men, and set out forthwith. Reginald shall go first; to-day the Percy will send craftsmen to deal with the walls, which are somewhat out of order."

" Were it not better," said Crawfurdland, " that Reginald should take command at Cumnock. He hath Lochnorris and Torringan at hand, both wise in council."

" No," replied Sir Ranald, after a pause; " no, John, I am the person expected to go, and, after all, the distance is but short; we can keep our eyes everywhere. I do doubt that Heselrig. I like not his visage; and, since he hath cast his eyes on Simon of Hilton's buxom daughter, I have fears that he will endeavour to carry her off a

second time; and, I bethink me, it will be good, in order to baulk him, to have her removed. Reginald shall go with a small band in a couple of days. I shall follow him after arranging matters here; with him shall go William Wallace. You see, kinsmen, since we last conferred on this subject, our anxiety hath not diminished. He is getting more and more involved with the Southrons, and how to keep him within bounds, passeth my understanding."

"Truly," replied Drongan, "this scheme is a wise one, if there is nothing else behind it. Give his love of action fair scope, and it will divert him from brooding over English oppression."

"Unless," said Crawfurdland, "he may find in those with whom he is to cope some cause of sympathy. Certes, he is a wonderful youth, and will one day manifest his prowess among them, I trust, with better chance of success than now."

"Nay," said Sir Ranald; "there is something beyond common in him altogether. No man, be his age or station what it may, doth not feel the power of this youth over him, when in his presence;

and, after that tuilzie on the bridge, it moved my mirth to see that the knave ever kept his eyes on him, while speaking to me, as if he was under the spell of a warlock. But, sooth to speak, his love of adventure is such, it is known to you, that he doth delight in going under strange disguises; and I doubt not, many of these bruilzies we have heard of lately have beginning in him; and this, it would seem, the Lord Governor doth know, or at least suspect also. As in duty bound, I did stand up for the lad, placing it all to the wild thoughtlessness of youth; yet I could see he was not satisfied. But, of a surety, if he doth know so much, he may know also, that the young man, though respectful to his elders and his betters, is not to be easily swayed by them from any settled purpose."

"He hath never seen William?" enquired Drongan.

"Unless it may be in attendance on me, how could he? and then he could not note him."

"Nay, if he hath seen him at all, a man like Percy would read his character in his countenance. No one can behold this stripling without

being moved to gaze long and attentively on him."

In fact, the secret spell which Wallace cast over men's minds could scarcely be better exemplified than in the case of his elderly kinsmen instinctively lowering their voices, as they did at present, when speaking of him. The disguises to which Sir Ranald alluded, and the celerity with which he moved from place to place, presenting a sort of ubiquity, tended also to envelope him with a strange and peculiar kind of mystery that took hold of the imagination of his countrymen.

In consequence of the plans formed by this conclave, the young Knight of Loudon, with Wallace, a few esquires of his father's household, and a suitable band, set off for Cumnock Castle to strengthen, or rather to renew the garrison there; for the followers of Cospatrick had been some time withdrawn, with the exception of a number just sufficient to man the walls. That little word, Cospatrick, implied in those days a tremendous stretch of feudal power, both in England and Scotland. Sprung from the kings of ancient Northumbria,

these haughty Earls inherited the pride along with the blood of a line of princes and possessions which were equal to those of some sovereigns. But their eminent position exposed them to the suspicion of both nations; and at this particular period, Edward, anxious to keep the Earl steadfast to his interest, had detained him near his person, and contrived to withdraw most of his followers from those Scottish districts which he chiefly distrusted.

Meanwhile, the Baron of Loudon bethought him of his encounter with the party of Heselrig, and deemed it necessary to make a tour or perambulation of his estate, in order to make himself master of every thing that had occurred in connection with this extraordinary visit. In his progress, he met with many instances of wanton destruction of property, and heard complaints of harsh usage from a number of his tenantry; but no particular outrage had been committed, except on the household of Simon of Hilton, a *liber firmarius* (yeoman), as the old charter phrase was, who rented one large farm from Sir Ranald, and was proprietor of another, which owned Loudon as feudal su-

perior, and where this worthy yeoman resided. His dwelling was a long low range of building covered with thatch, having in the middle a little elevated turret, like a pigeon-house of modern times, which served to distinguish the house from the granges of other tenants who were not small proprietors, and for sleeping apartments for his daughter and himself. The rest was used as a dormitory for the menials, free and bond, on the farms, excepting the kitchen-hall, which was common to all as a sitting and eating room. Simon, a stalwart carle of the Baron's age, met his lord at the door with a hearty salutation, which denoted the pleasure he felt on seeing him.

"By St Andrew! I am e'en glad to see thy broad face again, friend Simon," said the latter. "Thou wert but in poor case when we last foregathered."

"God's bennison on him that freed me from that thraldom! and his malison on the misleared ne'er-do-weel that caused it!" cried Simon. "Ah, my Lord, I see not the gallant Esquire who did me that good turn where he should be, ever at the side of

his uncle,"—scanning the train eagerly as he spoke to discover him to whom he alluded.

" But thou must tell me all, man; I come to learn everything that chanced between thee and the Southrons; and beshrew me, Simon, if thou hast foolishly given them offence, but thou shalt fall from my favour."

" And I should e'en deserve to do so," replied the other readily, " if I were guilty of such folly; but hear my tale:—Some ill-looking hallanshakers had been noted before as strangers among us, who came and went, without any of us so much as suspecting them of a bad errand; but we now think they must have been spying knaves from the English castle, in Scottish doublets and bonnets. Well, if this be sooth, they must have told some good romaunt to the Southron Knight; for my Lord may trust me, that no man of his will hold open mouth to men he knoweth not in these unchancy times—we be too well trained for that. However that be, down came this Knight with his riders from the Cumnock hills, as I gathered from their own words, where they had been, belike, on

similar business, and like a raid of sworn lifters, broke in upon us. I warned the Seneschal timeously, but ere he could gather a head, they had done the mishief my Lord hath just visied. They galloped up to my poor house so suddenly that my daughter, who by mishap was at the door, had not time to escape within ere she was espied. Now, this young Southron, with reverence be it spoken, is like many more of them, as very a knave in regard to women as may be; so, without more ado, he jumps me from his horse, and giveth chase to the affrighted girl. Her screams drew me to the spot, and I found her struggling in the arms of this riever. My Lord may blame me, but wellnigh mad with rage and vexation, I made my rung rattle off his steel head-piece till he loosened his hold, and my own knaves coming behind me with their staves, at the same time, as if to back me, an onslaught was made on us forthwith. We were surrounded, some of us severely hurt, and in short space they had bound us as we were found on that day—my poor child distracted, and I nearly as bad; for what could belooked for but dishonour and

misery from such an outrage, and by Southrons? ‘I will teach thee, churl,’ said the Knight, ‘to resist lawful authority;’ for they ever bring in the King’s name as an excuse for their lawless deeds, to terrify poor people. ‘I will teach thee to fall on thy knees at sight of an English crest, thou rebellious carle that thou art.’

“Caution left me in that hour of woe, and I fear me I cursed bitterly his King and him; but then he was busied in soothing his female captive; and an old ’Squire, who seemed not so bad, in a gentler voice, besought me to calm myself, ‘and,’ said he, ‘all may yet be well; but if thou ravest after that fashion, thou and thy daughter are but lost.’ I had just sense enough left to keep quiet, on hearing his good counsel; and I shall think better of the Southron that he had such a humane follower, and of the ’Squire himself, that he hath been the means of keeping me from rousing a sleeping tiger, and it would rejoice me to requite him.”

“Thou wert ever a good-hearted fellow, Simon, and thou art right here. Southrons are not all oppressors; they are like ourselves; but they must

obey their cruel King—there lieth the evil. Thou art sure no foolish gossiping hath been among you—quite sure?"

"By my halidom am I, they dare not; for, sooth to say, they would be but between the deil and the deep sea; they would be harried by the Southron first for so prating, and then punished in such sort as they would deserve, by their Lord. So it must be but a fool and an innocent that would babble in that fashion."

Sir Ranald smiled at this blunt speech, and inquired for Simon's rescued daughter.

"Come hither, Alice, shew duty and obedience, and gratitude withal for deliverance, to thy liege Lord," cried Simon, as he turned round, and presently a very pretty young woman appeared before them, with an obeisance to Sir Ranald, and an arch smile on her blushing face.

"How farest thou, child?" asked the good old Lord; "well, I see, and of thy fright ne'ertheless; for the hue of menseful maiden is on thy cheek, and that betokeneth health of mind and body both."

"Right well; thanks be to my Lord, who reft us from the felon hold of the Riever!"

"That thou owest to young William of Elderslie; but it is a deed that might do honour to the skill and wisdom of more mature years. By the rood, thou art a brave lass! and it seemeth to me now, by the sparkle in thine eye, that thou wouldst thyself do battle in defence of thine honour. She hath indeed shot up into a goodly form, friend Simon, and I marvel not that roving eyes do rest on her. Alack! for the day when London cannot protect the innocent maidens of his people from such foul wrong!"

"Woe worth the evil times!" responded Simon, with a groan; "it is not long since a foeman dared no more to appear within our bounds, than a wolf in the inner court of the Castle; but now, if we resist, we are esteemed rebels, though but in defence of ourselves; and if we submit, we are spoiled of our goods, and our females blurred with vile dishonour. I know not even now where to send my child, for here she is not safe a day."

"There is one place, my friend," replied the

Baron, with a look of proud indignation; "where even King Edward's power will not assail her. Thou shalt send her to the Castle. She shall be numbered among my Lady's maidens, and as safe shall she be there as if there were no loose rievers in the world."

Alice, at these words, with a quick and yet respectful motion, seized the hand of her Lord, and raised it to her lips.

"Thanks, thanks," she said, in a choked voice, the tears falling from her eyes the while, and then turned away to hide her emotion.

"The poor thing is overcome with joy," said Simon, his own voice faultering; "for, truth to tell, she hath grieved and lamented every hour, stout though her heart be, since that grievous day, in fear of the future; and she may well be proud too, for the honour of being bower maiden to such high dame is e'en too much for a poor yeoman's daughter."

"Enough! enough! fetch her down this very day; we know not what an hour may bring forth."

Cormack, the serf of Riccarton, being still under

treatment of the leech, was detained at Loudon, and from the known attachment to him of Wallace, great attention was paid him by all. In fact, Wallace, while at Riccarton, had gradually encroached on the rights of his uncle there to the services of this young man, by employing him on his own errands, without, however, withdrawing him altogether from his employment as a herdsman of mares in the forest, or improving, in any respect, the rude appearance which he inherited, and which had been maintained by his mode of life, that secluded him from the more civilized even of his own class. Loudon, pleased with the devotion manifested by the poor fellow to his nephew, proposed to Riccarton to keep him at his Castle, and have him trained to the use of arms, with a view to his enfranchisement, if he conducted himself properly, which the latter granted readily, saying, he would gladly make such a present to William Wallace.

CHAPTER IV.

A hugye giant, stiffe and sterke,
All foul of limb and lere;
Two goggling e'en, like fire farden,
A mouthe from eare to eare.

Old Ballad.

The Castle of Cumnock was situated near the base of that range of mountains which separates the county of Ayr from Galloway, and was built to keep in check, and as a stronghold against, the roving bands of freebooters, whom the latter sent forth occasionally to plunder the scattered population of this upland district. The hills were thickly covered with primeval forest, and most of the level country also. Indeed, this may be said of by far the greater portion of Ayrshire in those days, which is fully proved by the elder charters of the Burgh of Ayr, in which the fact is casually mentioned.

The Earl of March had not long before obtained a grant of the district, but as yet no branch of his potent family had been planted there; and the want of such powerful aid in keeping that dangerous region quiet, was keenly felt by Lord Piercy; but the policy of his Prince, and that suspicion which the injustice of his own proceedings engendered in the latter, kept Cospatrick at a distance even from his Scottish estates on the English border. Those hills, which have just been mentioned, form almost an amphitheatre round the spot where the Castle stood, rising high towards the east and south; the Glen of Afton, seen from a distance, "yawns" in that portion of the range literally "like a gash on warrior's breast." In those days, however, it was so densely wooded as to be nearly imperceptible when looked at from the elevated ground on the north.

The Castle had been repaired, and the Crawfurds were in full possession of it; and they had sallied forth several times in search of the depredators, but had not been successful, although the complaints of the people were still frequent and

loud. One day a group was engaged in eager conversation in a corner of the great Hall, when Wallace drew near to them. The principal speaker was an old Harper of Cospatrick, who had been sent there probably to cheer, in their solitude, the few Lothian men who occupied the Castle. Wallace sat down, in pensive mood, on a bench a little apart, apparently taking no interest in what was going on. The Harper had been telling of a frightful being that had lately been seen in the Glen of Afton, to which men gave the appellation of the Red Giant, or Ettin of Blackcraig, a hill that bounds this glen on the east, and his hearers, consisting of a man-at-arms and two or three yeomen, were listening with some little incredulity, and much wonder, to the rather enthusiastic discourse of the old man.

"Hast thou seen this monster, Harper?" enquired one with a grin, meant to shew his courage.

"Hast thou seen the Witch of Endor?" responded the Harper, in great wrath.

"Our Lady forgive us!" cried another. "Baldwin, let not a jest lead thee to profanity."

" I meant no more than to answer him according to his own understanding, shewing him how absurd it is for a thick-skulled spear-pusher to pretend to know more than a man, who, it is allowed, possesseth some sense."

" The old crabstick," muttered the other, aside; but his curiosity was too much excited to permit of a quarrel just then. " Thou art too impatient, Harper; thou shouldst explain to simple men how these things may be. Ghosts and witches we have all heard of, but men like walking towers—the saints forefend us!"

" Go to, thou gomeril, thou knowest nothing; giants are, to the full, as plentiful as ghosts or witches; thou mayest be sure of that. See now if that young 'squire be not laughing at thy folly?"

" Nay, pardon me, good Minstrel," said Wallace, " it was not that I laughed at; prithee, let us hear thy tale."

" Ay, heed him not, good Baldwin; go on," cried another.

" Nay, lads," quoth the Harper, with a good-

humoured smile; "if ye speak in this strain the old man must e'en do as ye list."

"Know, then, giants have had existence in all ages, from the creation of the world. Great and manifold have been the exploits performed by them, even among our own progenitors. Who has not heard of Bevis of Hampton"—

"And Goliah of Gath," interposed one.

"Wilt thou shut thy mouth?" said sharply the interrupted narrator. "Thou art but an ass to think a Philistine thine ancestor. Ettin is the word applied to them in Germania; and also, as you may observe here, when men have opportunity; and it doth come from the Scandinavian tongue."

Here his audience manifested unequivocal signs of impatience.

"And what mean ye now?" exclaimed this true scion of the genus irritabile Vatum. "Truly, I am throwing pearls before swine. Thou, Baldock, shouldst suck in knowledge as thou dost ale; and thou wouldst soon learn enough, I trow. Keep thyself quiet, and let this worthy stranger listen to me. Well! in the countries of Germany, whence

we draw our descent, those Ettins flourished in great numbers, spreading the fame of their deeds over the world. Their names are numerous as the sand of the sea, and I know many tales concerning them. One of them is the well-known Langbeen Riser, or Ettin Longshanks, which runneth after this fashion, as I translate it, into our own vernacular. The King offered a reward for the head of this mighty giant, who wrought great scaith in the land, eating, as we believe, much folk as well as kine; and a smith's son undertook to slay him.

"Here am I, Vidrick Verlandson,
With good sworde by my side;
And here I dare thy rest to steer,
And thy black wrath abide."
It was the Ettin Longshanks,
Upwinked with his e'e,
'And whence is he, the page sae bauld,
Dare say sic words to me?'[1]

It is too long to go through; but the page slew the giant, and gained wealth and honour by it."

[1] See Jamieson's *Northern Antiquities*.

"Did he eat, didst thou say, folk?" enquired the troublesome Baldock, his face somewhat pale.

"Ay, doubtless; why, fool, a man would hardly be half a meal to Longshanks. The bride of one Ettin ate ten sheep, and drank a butt of wine at her bridal feast. Well might the bridegroom say, he ne'er saw 'one so lay her lugs in a dish.'"

The listeners were observed by Wallace to cross themselves at this speech, in silent amazement; and, however impatient they were to hear of their own individual Ettin, the Harper was not again interrupted; but seeing the impression he had made, he chose, like a spoiled child, to dally with his hearers, and, beginning to play with the strings of his harp, from which he seldom parted, he sang some stanzas like the following, without attending much to the tune that accompanied them:—

In the whin-bush chaunts the lintwhite rare,
The laverock mounts on the morning air,
The merle and the mavis, low in the vale,
So sweetly they lilt their soft love-tale;

And the small wren chirps on the castle wall,
While the redbreast warbles from bow'r to hall,
But the hawk on his eyrie stands alone,
And its all for the wild Macrie that's gone.

Here pausing, and looking up—"Know ye where I got these words, gallants?" enquired the Harper.

None knew.

"Aha! I surmised as much."

"Here," thought all of them, their curiosity much excited by his promised account of the giant —"here is another digression." It is probable that he guessed what was passing in their minds; and resolving that they should never be right, he went on as follows:

"A certain man who wons near the fastnesses, at the base of this black crag—that is, as near as any Christian can live to that savage spot, was one day last week tempted, it might be by the foul fiend, to wander after a stray sheep far up the Glen of Afton, near the extremity of which stands this rugged hill; and as he got into the gloom of the dell, the poor hind became eerie, and

sang, to keep up his spirits, the song of which you have just heard a part; but he had not got much farther than I did just now, when he was startled by a noise overhead, and, looking up, he beheld a sight that nearly drove him demented. On a jutting piece of rock sat the Ettin, seemingly thrice the size of ordinary men; his body was covered with long red hair, and his eyes shone like two stars in a dark night. His face had nothing earthly in it—all was like a demon on his countenance. The poor husbandman was so overcome by fear, that he could do nought but gaze on him, until the giant rose slowly, displaying his enormous length, and disappeared."

"Said he nothing?" "Spoke he not?" asked every one in a breath.

"Something he did say; but the poor man averred that his voice was like the roar of a mountain linn, and he could remember no word he spoke, and no wonder, for he reached his home distraught."

"Is he of mortal mould, thinkest thou, Harper?" enquired the man-at-arms, who had hitherto taken scarcely any part in the scene.

"Certainly, of mortal mould," was the reply; "but so stark and stalwart that no man of nether earth can mell with him. Marry, we have no Vidrich Verlandsons now! He lifteth an ox, they say, with as much ease as a cat carrieth off a mouse."

"By our Lady!" said the man-at-arms, his eye kindling, "'twere a gallant deed to encounter this faitour giant."

The Harper shook his head gravely. "Thou do'st talk like what thou art, a young man. May Heaven forgive our sins! this creature is surely uncanny, for he drinketh the blood of men that fall into his clutches, and fierce and cruel must he be who liveth on such fare. And now, my friends," looking with a pleased aspect on the blank visages around, "now that you are reasonably sensible of the truths I have told you, I shall inform you farther, that I had doubts of the existence of this Ettin, until I questioned the poor villein myself, and he related to me all I have told you, and gave me the very song in his own tongue, which I have traduced into our vernacular, to vouch for his tale.

He said, too, that the song was made by a minstrel of this place, on the last of the old chiefs of the district, MacRi, being literally, ' son of the Chief.' "

A pause here ensued. At last the man-at-arms remarked that the new Castellan should know of this strange discovery, and a consultation was held as to the best and most effectual manner of telling it, so as to make a proper impression.

" Thou must choose thy best words, Harper," said the man-at-arms.

" Nay," remarked a simple-looking yeoman, " I rede you send no Harper to him. Rememberest thou not how he said to Baldwin, in the middle of a rare lay, too. " Tush ! old man, thy brain worketh like barm ! "

The Harper, a little disconcerted in his hour of triumph, replied hastily : " Thou sayest true ! this silent young knight loveth no minstrelsy ; but his cousin"—looking round for Wallace—" I grieve me he hath left the hall ; his kinsman is the person. A choice minstrel, my masters ! No longer agone than yesterday he held me lay about a matter of two hours. He hath rare skill on the harp, too."

"He hath skill in everything," observed the man-at-arms, "and he can pitch the bar two yards farther than Tom of Linton, the strongest man in our band. He were the person to head a raid against the Ettin."

"Well spoken!" cried they all. The Harper shook his head. "Methinks he will not choose that feat. Saw ye not how grave and silent he looked whilst I told the tale, and then he went away, without as much as 'thankye, Harper, for thy courtesy.' Nevertheless, he is both courteous and debonnair, and will for a word state the matter to the Castellan."

The consultation here closed, and the several listeners parted, to tell the story, each after his own fashion, with what flourishes his nature might.

Young Sir Reginald or Ranald (we shall adhere to the former to distinguish him from his father), for he too was a belted knight, received the intimation of the near neighbourhood of this singular depredator with a degree of eagerness which surprised the parties who made the communication. He had sent detachments round the vicinity, in all direc-

tions, to secure every suspicious prowler, and disperse any armed bands of roving plunderers, with which the country everywhere abounded, but without meeting with a single party of any consequence; and he had begun, with the susceptibility of a youthful aspirant to fame, to fear he would gain no credit by his command. But this deep and secluded dell had escaped his notice. In fact, it was altogether so impassable, that the very nature of it, although affording security, seemed to preclude that freedom of egress and communication necessary to those who lived by theft and rapine. When, therefore, Sir Reginald heard it mentioned, he conjectured at once that, instead of one giant, he would find some scores of plunderers in these wild regions, and he resolved instantly on having it explored as thoroughly as its almost impenetrable fastnesses admitted; and he sought out Wallace, with the view of taking his opinion on the case; for, like every other person, he had great confidence in the extraordinary sagacity of his cousin.

But, to his disappointment, Wallace listened

very coldly to his ardent expressions, and his sanguine expectations of gaining some addition to his warlike reputation.

"I judge, from what we have seen of this spot, that no regular band of reivers can keep themselves in it. A few unhappy refugees there may be from southron oppression, and thou wouldst not, cousin Reginald, drag them from a place of safety to undergo the torments which the tools of of our tyrant would inflict?"

Reginald, in his selfish desire for renown, would have disregarded this observation, but he felt the influence which his cousin possessed over him, and restrained himself, while he replied calmly—

"Thou must recollect, William, what is our duty. I am sent here to suppress robbery; and if those robbers are, as thou sayest, refugees, still they are no less robbers. My knightly oath bindeth me to accomplish what I have undertaken. If, as thou dost say, these men should be unfortunates who have felt the rod of the oppressor, it is but a justification of the treatment they met with, to prey on good men who have not injured them."

" Thou dost assume too much, my cousin. I said not there were refugees in Afton, but that it was more likely the people there, if any be, are of that hapless class than robbers. Sure I am, thou wouldst grieve if innocent men, and, it may be, women and children, should be slain in an onslaught in such a place by men with minds heated by rustic tales, and nerves shattered by superstitious fear; ever the most cruel are fighting men under such influence."

Reginald looked fixedly at Wallace.

" William Wallace," said he, " let there be some understanding between us. " With me, the first thing is my knightly fame; next, the cause of my country; but the first must never give place to the last, nor to any earthly consideration—not even the preservation of life."

" The last I well believe: thou mightest have spared so much; but thou hast not felt that glow of patriotism which shoots through my frame like lightning, and which, to the exclusion of everthing else, occupies my thoughts when I reflect on the wrongs of my country, if thou do'st speak of the

latter, and that empty sound Fame—that unwholesome air which doth merely fan the pride of man—in the same breath."

Reginald cast a glance on his cousin, and saw the subject was becoming serious.

"Thou art severe, William; natheless it is right we should know each other's sentiments. Then what wouldst thou counsel if thou dost fear harshness on the part of our men? I admit in that thou art right."

"Grammercy, fair cousin, for the frank admission," replied Wallace immediately. "My opinion shall be given without reserve, and the more so that thou dost deal so openly with me. It doth seem passing strange that, notwithstanding all the complaints we hear from the country people, we can light on no parties to whom blame may attach. But have we taken pains to ascertain that their complaints are just? May there not be something under it which hath not yet come to light? Thou knowest that there are Southrons among the Lothian men; nay, that the latter are, many of them, rank Englishmen. And dost thou think, Reginald,

that the Piercy has sent us here without some special purpose, known only to himself and his familiars? Answer me!"

"My father did suspect some secret object," replied his cousin; "but we could conjecture nothing that is feasible."

"And it is not possible that we are here," continued Wallace, "without being under strict espial. I will not venture to speak, even to thee, what I fear, because it is, I confess, wild and improbable. But hear my counsel. Let a small and select band explore this glen; if there is danger in it, we shall share it. Some, at least, will escape, to report what hath chanced; and this Governor will award to thee the meed of praise for caution, in regard to thy soldiers, and for spirited adventure, such as errant knight might love, as concerns thyself."

"Now, by all my hopes, dear William," said the delighted Reginald, "thou hast hit on the very thing. Men say true, there is neither clear head nor stout heart like thine, beardless though thou be."

The old Minstrel, "Baldwin of the many lays,"

as he often said his old lord had designed him, walking out on the same afternoon towards Afton Water, near the edge of that stream was surprised by the sound of a clairshach from behind a small thicket, and a manly voice singing the following, which seemed to be the continuation of an effusion in honour of his favourite glen :—

Lonely and wild! how bright thy rills
  Flash back the summer beam,
As, leaping from the dark grey hills,
  They rush to join thy stream.

Still may thy waters gaily flow,
  And sparkle in the sun,
As if no tide of human woe
  Could in thy valley run.

They tell of cedar-hills afar,
  Beneath the sun's bright path,
And groves of spice, whose odours are
  The morning's balmy breath.

I'd rather see the cap of snow
  That crowns thy mountain crest,
Than breathe the perfum'd winds that blow
  In southern lands so blest.

Far rather walk thy birchen bower,
  Moist with the dew of May,
Than joy me where each gorgeous flower
  Reflects the blazing day.

At the close, the unseen Minstrel paused, and Baldwin could hear a deep sigh. The latter then, stepping in front of the bushy screen that divided them, beheld a man of middle age, reclining, in a pensive attitude, on the green. His dress was a tunic of coarse woollen plaid, reaching to the knee, and worsted hose, with a broad bonnet for the head—garments which contrasted unfavourably with the somewhat gay attire of the more fortunate Harper of Cumnock.

"A fair goodmorrow, brother," said the latter, regarding the stranger with a look in which pity was blended with self-complacency. "Thou wilt pardon my intrusion, seeing it hath been partly unwitting, specially as we are brethren of the same craft."

"The land is free to thee as to me, I opine," said the other, without changing his posture.

"Truly, it may be lawful to say, seeing it is the land of the Earl of March, my good lord and patron, that it is even more free to me than thee, stranger as thou art."

"I care as little for thy master as for thee,"

replied the other, churlishly; "but as for being stranger, know thou art here the strangers—thou and thy Earl!"

"The saints protect us!" ejaculated Baldwin, in fear and surprise. "Thou hast little care of thy life, friend, to talk in that fashion, slighting the name and the power of Scotland's mightiest lord. Who art thou, I pray thee?"

"Nameless I am; but the day hath been when my place was high as thine, my garb as rich, and my lays, it may be, as well sung."

A feeling of interest arose in the Harper; his kindlier nature was touched; and he sat down, unbidden, beside him.

"Though happier now," said the old man, sadly, "I, too, have had my day of trouble. It is the lot of man; and he who doth not partake of another's grief, will himself be unpitied in his hour of retribution, when it comes, as come it will, sooner or later."

"Thou speakest fairly; but the words of the Southron were ever fair and false."

"Call me not Southron. Many hundred years

have fled since my forbears settled in the fertile plains of Lothian. I am a Scot, as thou art, by birth and descent; for who can tell, throughout this land, that his ancestors never knew another country? not even the children of the Gael."

"Ay, stranger," replied the other, "that may be; but who can tell when the sires of our race took up their abodes on these surrounding hills and dales, where—scarce two score years have gone since—a thousand warriors, armed with spear and glaive, would rush, at the first blast of a bugle-horn, to combat by the side of him who was the chief and the father of his tribe? But they are all gone now—scattered, like autumn leaves, in a blighting wind, by the pestilential presence of the children of the South. Mark me, old man; I know thee, at least by repute. Thou wilt make thyself believe, in the heat of thy maker-craft, that I am an outcast from the world, and warp me, it may be, into one of thy Saxon ballads; but thou wilt not betray me—wilt not tell, in yonder stronghold, erewhile of a noble race, that there is one who doth

speak freely of Cospatrick, and have me hunted down like a wolf of the wold."

"I will not have thee oppressed," said Baldwin, "neither shall I permit thee, wayward as thou art, to speak despitefully of my lord or of the Saxon people. Come, come; surely two harpers may meet and confer, without entering into national disputes? What have simple men like thee and me to do with the quarrels of nations? I would discourse of our noble art, that is peaceful, and averse from strife, though it doth celebrate the deeds of warring men. I recognise in thee the Minstrel of the Glen, whose sweet lays have reached mine ear, though thou wert all unknown."

"Be it so," replied the stranger, after a moment's pause. "Be there those in yonder castle who love our gentle art? Can they kindle with the fiery song, and melt with the tale of woe?"

"Yea, truly, many such have we; but no harper. Save myself, no one who hath been entered regularly to it; but we have one who hath skill surpassing that of many a professed son of song."

"And who may he be?" enquired the stranger, with a look of interest.

"Even a bold and stalwart esquire, kinsman to the captain of our hold."

"A Crawfurd?"

"Nay, save by his mother, who is sister to the Sheriff; thane born and knightly is he, natheless, and of the ancient blood of the country—and Wallace his name. Thou mayest have seen him—few that see can forget him; he hath no marrow for fair stature and comeliness."

A smile stole over the hitherto rigid features of the strange Harper. "His race is known to me at least, and hath even mixed blood with the chieftains of these hills," said he. "I pray you, is aught known of his teacher, who was erst monk of Kilwinning?"

"I know not," replied Baldwin; "men say he disappeared years ago. He is called the mad priest, his brain being somewhat infirm; it is rumoured that he died somewhere far off—thus a yeoman of Loudon told me; and he said, moreover, that he was

known by the name of Father Angus. Be he the one you mean?"

"The same," answered the stranger.

"Canst thou tell me aught of the giant who men say doth inhabit this glen?" enquired Baldwin, looking towards Blackcraighill with a shudder. "I hear that thy habitation is not far from the mouth of it."

"The dwelling of the wandering Harper can scarcely be called his own, but there is a cottage some hundred falls above this which may be styled more frequently my resting-place; touching the giant, doubtless, I have heard, as all men must in these parts. I may have seen him, but I care not much to do so. Grim, grizly, and awful is his appearance, if the tales be sooth, and I know not how to doubt them."

"And whence may he have come, dost thou know, good brother? where hath he sojourned before?"

"What can I say? who knoweth if he came into the world like common men? Doubtless he hath

made much stir among the inmates of yonder castle?"

"Truly, thou mayest say so," replied Baldwin, thrown off his guard by the deep interest he took in the subject; "thou mayest be assured of that, since the Knight himself, with the Esquire just spoken of, and twenty picked men besides, are to go in search of him."

Here the Harper paused, as if recollecting himself. "But what have we to do with them? I pray thee, hast thou heard of the far-famed harper, True Thomas of Ercildowne? Ah! he is the man for tales of fairies, and of giants too! Far hath he travelled into fairy-land; and it is known that Thomas was high in favour with the Fairy-queen."

"Surely all men have heard of Thomas the Rhymer?"

"Didst thou know him, friend?"

"In my youth."

"Yes, but that was long ago. Thomas hath now vanished from among us, and many believe, to dwell with his beloved queen of Elfland. For my part, I hardly believe that it can be so," said Baldwin looking doubtfully into his companion's face.

"What know we, poor mortals, about that which is possible; many give no credit to the existence of this very Ettin under our nose here; but doubtless thy knight will clear up all doubts on the subject. And when doth he set out, friend, in search of him?"

But Baldwin was now aware of his imprudence in telling so much as he had disclosed to a perfect stranger, and professed total ignorance of the matter, excepting what he had learned from a common bruit, which, after all, might be but nonsense.

"Humph!" said the other with a sharp glance at him. "I bid you good day, then, brother Harper. We may chance to meet again."

"Indeed, I hope so," replied Baldwin; "such meetings are pleasant to me."

As they spoke, both arose from the ground, the stranger shewing a height and a breadth of shoulder that surprised the old man, who exclaimed, as they parted—"By my faith! thou art the most buirdly fellow that ever bore harp."

CHAPTER V.

Nor track nor pathway might declare,
That human foot frequented there,
Until the mountain-maiden shewed
A clambering unsuspected road
That wended through the tangled screen,
And opened on a narrow green.

* * *

A form of maiden loveliness,
'Twixt childhood and sweet youth.

SCOTT.

THE morning of the next day had been appointed for exploring the Glen of Afton. It was judged proper not to enter it at a very early hour, because the fog which generally enveloped the hills surrounding it, kept the place in darkness until the morning was somewhat advanced. The two kinsmen rode in advance of the party, which consisted entirely of Crawfords, with the exception of a few yeomen as a sort of reserve, and to take charge of

the horses, when the journey could no longer be prosecuted on horseback. When they entered the place where the ravine began to become narrow, the gloom deepened gradually on them. On the plain the sun was shining gaily; in the glen he was not visible; but above their heads, on the sides of the rocky hill, thick clouds of mist rolled and wavered in the fresh morning wind, rising with the latter, and subsiding also as it fell. Not a sound was heard; and, as they travelled onward, the silence and gloom around invaded the spirits of every one, for no whisper was allowed in the band. At length they reached a spot where their guide stopped, and, pointing significantly to the ground, indicated that no horse-print was visible there, and that they could no longer proceed. The whole party, instantly dismounting, gave their horses to some of their attendants, while others of the latter were directed to follow behind them. These were armed with bows and spears.

Reginald had previously remarked that his cousin, on this occasion, wore a vizor to his head-piece, which he had never before observed him to

do, his maxim being, " that a man's hands should keep his face;" and, coupled with the remarks he had made before, this circumstance impressed Reginald with the belief that the present service must needs be one of great jeopardy, for he had the highest opinion of both his cousin's sagacity and courage. Onwards they paced, the darkness increasing as the dell became more and more contracted, and the faces of the yeomen, and even a few of the stout Crawfords, assuming an unusual elongation as they proceeded.

After a toilsome march, along the margin of the Afton, here a small streamlet, among fallen fragments of rock and disjointed stones, the hills on each side began to be almost perpendicular, and the trees, from their position on them, were, in many instances, thrown completely across the chasm, mingling in the centre with those from the opposite side, in such a manner, as nearly to exclude the light of day.

" Didst thou hear aught?" whispered Sir Reginald to Wallace.

"I did; it seemed the cry of a plover," was the answer.

And silently they stumbled on in the darkness, until, becoming somewhat impatient, the leader demanded to know of their guide, "how far they were to travel in that manner?"

"For an hour longer," replied the man; "when the path becomes more open."

"St Andrew be our aid!" softly ejaculated the young Knight. "I would it were lighter."

"Heed not the darkness," said Wallace, in the same low tone. "Thou hast novelty in this adventure, at least, and that is to thee, Sir Reginald, to say nothing of the hazard, a singular inducement."

There might be something slightly ironical in the manner of saying this, but it passed unheeded.

At the end of the period mentioned by their guide, the party emerged from this Cimmerian darkness into a more open space; and going on a little farther, the dell, taking a sudden turn to the

right, disclosed, immediately before them, a small patch of the deepest green, through which the mountain stream meandered. It was surrounded by rocks rising perpendicularly to the height of some forty feet, save where the ravine turned abruptly off; and their tops were covered with lofty trees, so densely planted, as to form a barrier almost to a foot-passenger. While they were yet enjoying the relief to the eye, which the tufts of early wild-flowers, here and there in an earthy spot in the face of the rock, afforded, the mist, which had cleared as they came into the light, again descended to nearly the very ground.

"This place," whispered Sir Reginald, "seems a proper centre, where outlaws might draw out from the neighbouring covert. What think'st thou, Wallace; shall we dern ourselves here a short while? I can see the most of them would like a little rest after that dreadful hole we have passed through."

"I think thou art right. If the mist should rise again, we might explore this spot. Perhaps some trace of man may be discovered."

While he was yet speaking, the mist began to

rise; and when it had risen so far as to reveal the top of the surrounding rock, an object met their eyes, which overwhelmed the band with amazement.

Scarcely twenty paces from where they halted stood a female figure, so beautiful, that every man believed her to be supernatural; and it is not strange that they did so, considering the superstition of the age, and the savage nature of the scenery around. She was a young woman, apparently of the age of seventeen, dressed in a kirtle of green, fitting close to the person, and shewing her perfect proportions. On one side hung from her neck by silken cords, a small grass-green bugle-horn, and on the other, two or three arrows appeared stuck in her girdle. In her hand was a bow; on her head she wore a small silken cap or bonnet, decorated with a plume, such as youths of the other sex were wont to wear. Her raven hair appeared under this covering, falling over her neck in rich and luxuriant clusters, and parted in front to reveal an alabaster forehead, under which two dark eyes flashed with peculiar lustre; a straight nose and ruddy cheeks, slightly tinged by

the sun, with teeth like the snow of her own hill, completed the charms of her person. It would be difficult to tell whether she, or the intruders on her solitude, shewed most surprise. The men held their breath, and gave way only to a few expressions of amazement, as they crossed themselves, their eyes riveted on her. Wallace alone betrayed little emotion, probably from the great command he had over himself, while Sir Reginald gazed in wonder like the rest. She at first drew back, like a startled fawn, the blood mantling in her cheek, and then retiring as hastily, and leaving her pale, panting, and leaning against a tree, as she fixed her eyes on the formidable band of armed warriors before her.

Sir Reginald first spoke—"What art thou, maiden; so unlike the wilds thou dost inhabit—speak?"

She stood erect, instantly recovering herself,—

"A simple mountain maid," replied she, in a silvery voice, "unaccustomed to the sight of strangers."

He advanced a few paces nearer to her, and she

by this time quite collected, stood as if void of fear.

"What seek ye in this solitary place, in your garments of iron?" enquired she.

"We seek to know the secrets of this rugged glen," replied Reginald; "and, by Heaven, I swear, if our expedition reveal many more such marvels as this spot, 'twere worth an age spent in the adventure. Tell me, fair maid, what thou art, and who is thy sire, and how camest thou into this fearful wilderness?"

"That I may not do."

"With whom dost thou live if really thou art of this world," enquired he, relapsing again into a feeling of misgiving as to her nature, for he ever heard the whispered remarks of his kindred behind, who were decidedly fixed in their belief that she was a fairy—her garb confirming them in it. She smiled, as she replied, that it was not surely so rare to find a rustic maiden in the Cumnock hills, as to excite surprise.

"Wert thou indeed a rustic, the case were different; but thou art noble, if human at all—thy

form and spirit equally reveal it. Come hither, William, why stand so far apart? Assist me to question her."

"Wilt thou not, fair one, in all courtesy, satisfy our captain, who hath reason for his enquiries?" asked Wallace.

She turned quickly at the sound of his voice, and gazed on him, as she replied, "What boots it thee or him to know me? Methinks it is but scant courtesy ye shew in so persisting."

"Canst thou tell of any habitation here," asked Reginald, varying the nature of his queries, "where we might find refreshment?"

"The poor man's cot, Sir Knight—such, I perceive, is thy degree—can ill supply the wants of so many, although the will be strong."

"We have traversed, since morn, these rugged and darksome wilds, and thou alone have we seen of aught human. Canst thou tell of other inhabitants, where they be, and who?" enquired Wallace again.

"The wolf, the fox, and the deer, are the deni-

zens of these hills. The foot-prints of men are more rarely met with."

"But they may be, maiden: thou canst not be alone; so, I pray thee, without longer dallying, tell us how we may approach thee—for I see no trace of a path—that thou mayest lead us to some habitation."

She hesitated for a minute, then looking attentively, first at Wallace, then at Sir Reginald, "Methinks," said she, "I cannot be wrong in believing that two goodly Christian men, a belted knight and a stately warrior, would not seek to injure a helpless maid, and an old man even less able to help himself."

"Thou hast the word, hand and glove, of us both, that helpless innocence of either sex shall be safe from us."

Here a man-at-arms, whose confidence had returned, came up to his leader, and pointed in a direction a little to the left of her position, whispering something at the same time. She guessed his meaning immediately; and, with a proud look,

assured them that he would find no path there without her assistance.

"Lonely people here must secure themselves from attacks on every side," said she; "but I take thy plighted word the more readily and speedily, because thou mightest have reason to suspect, did I delay. Please you to pause, while I bring one who is better able to hold converse with you."

She then disappeared among the trees.

"What thinkest thou, now, William Wallace? This damsel is neither giantess nor refugee serf."

"Nor robber, fair cousin," said Wallace, with a smile. "Come! my whinger against thine, this wonderful maid—who is only so because all is savage around her—is living in perfect innocence here; and thou wilt discover nothing, either of elf, ettin, or riever, about her."

"It is a wager," replied the other; "always provided that 'about her' means kith, kin, or allies in this glen."

"Even so; and in good time, here she comes, and indeed with an old man."

The maiden stepped out on the little green, from an aperture in the rock, hitherto unseen by them, leading a man, apparently of four score years, whose sight seemed too much impaired to permit of his threading the mazes of the path through the rock. The damsel bent her head gracefully, in salutation, as they advanced, and her aged friend reverently lifted his bonnet.

"Welcome," said he, "noble sirs, to this lone spot; many years have passed since it was graced by such goodly company."

"We thank you, kind my host—so let me call thee."

"Let me see! let me see!" said the old man, with a sort of childish curiosity. "I was wont to know soldiers by their shields;—the ermine fess, and on thy helm the double-headed bird. Welcome, gallant Crawford! Ah, me! ah, me! what years have flown since I saw that blazonry in stricken field; but men must fade—fade away like the trees of the forest. Said I not well, sirs?"

"Right well," replied Sir Reginald, with a look of pity.

"I pray you, let him rest; he is somewhat flurried and overcome, it may be by surprise. Sit on this knoll, grandsire," continued the maiden, in a soothing tone.

He sat down accordingly, and after looking round, began again to give vent to the garrulity of age.

"And what hath brought this fair band so far up Afton? Seldom do men resort to this quarter. I doubt not but the Lord of the castle hath again begun to think that there are more men in this rude wild than the poor old hermit of the Amri. Let me see, let me see: just ten years have passed since so many steel bonnets glittered here. Their chief, a surly youth, questioned me hard. 'What dost thou here?' asked he. 'I was born near this glen,' said I, 'where my sires lived since the time of good King Cavus. The land that belonged to them was reft by the Dunbar of Lothian; but worn, old, and helpless, he permitted me to wander as I listed through forests once mine own. It chanced then that one in his band knew I spoke sooth, so he passed on his way and left me; but

none in the castle halls know now that there is such a person as the Hermit of the Amri; yet the tale may have been heard among the Crawfords."

He paused, and his eye casually rested on Wallace.

"I have heard," said the latter, "that an aged man lived somewhere near this, on lands once his own, but I heard also that he was no more."

"He is no more for this world, indeed," replied the old man, with a sigh.

"But this maiden—whence is she?"

"Ah me! I am faint. This tumult in my breast is too much for me. My child, where is Allan? He is better able to talk with these gentle warriors."

"Allan, grandsire, went forth with me to the chase. Being behind him, I heard some noise near this spot, and came to the front of the rock, where I discovered our fair company; but he passed on unwitting of my stop." "He doth speak," continued she to Sir Reginald, "of one who, in former times his menial, adheres to him in his fallen fortunes, and doth dwell with him in the woods."

She then occupied herself in soothing and encouraging her aged relative, who soon again began to speak.

" Did'st thou ask about the maiden ? She is the child of my fair-haired Mary, though hers be black as the corby's plume. She dwelleth not here, but she doth come at times, like sunbeam to prison cell, to cheer the old man in his hermitage. She cometh like a blink of sunlight, and she goeth as fast; pass a little while, and she will be away again."

There was so much of truth in the appearance of the parties, as well as their words, that Sir Reginald, after looking at Wallace, said, with a shrug of his shoulders,

" By my faith, William, thou dost ever win; whatever it be, thou art on the right side; the whinger is thine, and, what is worse, my hopes of a good turn of arms have passed away. Old friend, I thank thee for thy courteous attention to my demands. I will trouble thee no more than to ask—yet the question doth seem bootless—if thou hast

heard any tales concerning a strange being that hath been seen in this valley ?"

" The Ettin ! by my sooth have I," said the old man eagerly ; " but he is not near me. Jesu guard me else ! He doth dwell in a cave near the foot of Black Craig, men say, some miles below this. Ye must have passed it, but ye searched and found him not. Aha ! better for you ; all the better !"

" Thou hast not seen him, surely ?"

" No, no. What can he get from the Hermit ; but Allan knoweth all about him."

" Hath he seen him ?"

" No, no ; thou knowest not the Ettin ! None see him and live. He doth prey on the husbandmen and serfs between his cave and the castle. Farther up he could get nothing but a couple of old men. Ah ! he knoweth not of my child ; that would be a morsel for him !"

" You see, fair sirs," said the maiden, " that his intellect, which hath failed him, is even worse than usual with his present agitation. Let it suffice that these idle tales are not credited by me.

I believe the creature, whatever it was, that took the villein's cattle, is no more a giant than my poor grandsire," bending over and caressing him.

" Art thou not in fear for thyself in these rude wolds, fair maid ?" enquired Wallace. " Methinks the tales which blanch an ordinary woman's cheek, even in peaceful hall, might scare away a bolder heart than beats in female bosom from a place like this."

" For me," replied she, " I am here to-day and gone to-morrow, and no one knoweth when I come ; few know that such a person lives."

" And that seemeth to me as strange as any wonder we have seen to-day," said Sir Reginald. " Thou did'st seem to us all, while on that rock, like a celestial spirit looking from above on lowly mortals."

She smiled at this compliment like one who was not quite unaccustomed to such language.

" And trust me, gallant Knight, thou did'st seem to me as one who doubted whether he spoke to maid or elf," said she, with an arch smile ; " but I am not altogether defenceless. I can use my weapons

indifferently well." So saying, with a sportive vivacity, which became her age, and shewed that her confidence in the strangers was fully established, she drew an arrow from her side, and, in an instant, lodged it in the staff of a spear, at a goodly distance from her—one of those which the yeomen had stuck into the ground, on seeing the amicable nature of the parley.

"Well shot, by St Hubert!" cried Sir Reginald; "thou art the queen of all fair huntresses! It doth grieve me to part with so much beauty and courtesy, and withal, ignorant of the name she bears; but the sun hath passed the meridian, and, my merry men, we must e'en return as we came."

They then took leave, and departed.

"Truly, Reginald," said Wallace, as they resumed their journey through the narrow chasm, "thy lady-love would scarce like to see thee in presence of this damsel of the Amrie, as the old man doth style his place of abode. Thou, heretofore so silent and grave, and anxious only to win renown for her sake, seemed to look somewhat too keenly on this obscure rustic."

"And thou! thinkest thou I did not observe, when thou didst raise thy vizor, that fixed gaze of thine on her beauties? The damsel herself beheld, and smiled as she looked on thee."

"That may be," replied Wallace; "it matters not what I may do, but thou dost bear the colours of a noble dame; and at tournay and in fight, thou dost search still for one other wreath to gratify her vanity, or her thirst for distinction. I prithee forgive my bluntness—I see my speech doth offend."

"Thou dost err, cousin; such phrase, applied to one so pure and so high, cannot affect her."

"Do not speak so gravely, then, Reginald; I know her good qualities; but, touching this woodland nymph, I judge her to be what the Hermit gives her out, but nurtured in other places than wild woods."

"Thou mayest so say, indeed. No castle hall in our shire doth hold a damsel of a mien more noble; and her speech, too, doth not smack of the hills. Doubtless these sad times do make even innocent people cautious; and, feeling this, I deemed

it would shew lack of courtesy to push my questions farther."

"Thou wert in the right; for what more could be done? Without assured information, it would be folly to wander and to toil through these fastnesses, in search of imaginary personages."

So conversing, they returned to the Castle of Cumnock.

CHAPTER VI.

——————— Gentle Northumberland,
If thy offences were upon record,
Would it not shame thee, in so fair a troop,
To read a lecture of them? If thou wouldst,
Thou shouldst there find some heinous articles.
Richard II.

Lord Piercy, Governor of the Western Shires, had his principal residence at Ayr, in the castle of that name. He might have been styled a good specimen of the Norman noble, in the earlier portion of the thirteenth century, when the bitter jealousies between Saxon and Norman had not yet given place to that amalgamation which the lapse of two more generations sufficed to produce, and which existed at the period of our tale. His distinguishing soubriquet of "The Proud Lord," indicated that his natural feelings and dispositions

were obvious to all. He looked with contempt on nobles who boasted not a foreign origin; and, such was the high opinion he entertained of his own order, that he regarded common people as worthy of consideration only in so far as they ministered to the wants of, and were essential to, the privileged classes. But among those of his own rank he was held to be "full knightly," and scrupulous in the extreme on every chivalrous point of honour. The power he possessed was absolute within his jurisdiction; and he was esteemed zealous, wise, and active, for the interests of his king.

Such was the potent personage who ruled, with stern adherence to his sovereign's command, over a principal portion of Scotland, and whom we are to introduce to our readers, sitting on an elevated chair, in the great hall of his castle, arrayed in a long gown of purple velvet, fastened at the throat by a jewelled brooch, and at the middle by a girdle or baldric, which sparkled with gems. His features, handsome and aristocratic as they were, had that in them which gave him a look singularly ex-

pressive of his character. The hall was crowded with people of every description, who had repaired to him on business, and with the retainers, knights esquires and pages, of his household, who assisted in maintaining order among the motley group of petitioners and supplicants. After a considerable time spent in listening and in passing judgment, the crowd became thinner, and at length the hall was completely cleared, and the Lord Governor, vacating his chair, retired into a sort of cabinet adjoining, beckoning on a knight in attendance as he went in. When the two were alone, the former enquired "if the man was at hand."

"He is, my Lord; and hath been waiting since I announced his presence."

"Bring him in then, Heselrig, and see that he have speech of no one: it is especially needful to be careful in this matter."

The Knight returned forthwith, conducting a man in the garb of a yeoman.

"Thy name is Baldock?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Thou wert in the service of Earl March, and art now in mine, forming one of the garrison at Cumnock? So much I know of thee, and I desire to know no more. What hast thou to tell, that thou seekest an audience of us?"

The man cast a look at Heselrig.

"Narrate to my Lord what thou hast told me, briefly and distinctly; and use no double-dealing —no untruths—mark you me; but speak exactly as I directed thee (giving him a peculiar look), for my Lord loveth not long harangues."

"As my Lord doth know," replied Baldock, "that my duty was to watch the motions of the young esquire Wallace while at Cumnock, no more is to be said than what belongeth to him, as it seemeth to me. Thus then it was:—Wallace was seen by me, several times, to hold converse with a wandering minstrel, whom men call 'The Minstrel of the Glen,' because, forsooth, he hath a howff near the mouth of Afton. Yet he is nought save a begging harper; but I did suspect that he held intercourse with other people, and went between Wallace and them; natheless, I could get no proof of it till the

day after our journey up that darksome dell, when, being fatigued with a long walk, I threw myself under a thicket, on Afton bank, to avoid the noontide heat, and I had been there but a few minutes when this minstrel and Wallace, who had met at the bridge, sought also that retired spot for private converse. I lay quiet, and heard every word they said. ' Thus was I warned,' said the Minstrel, as if continuing what he had been saying, ' but I could not find thee.' ' Heed it not,' said Wallace, ' all is well now,—the matter hath been skilfully managed;—the old man—the maiden and her tale—the Hermit of Amri—nothing could be better carried out.' And here he laughed." (" The knaves! the crafty knaves!" muttered Lord Piercy.) " Where didst thou get the men disposed of so expeditiously ?" " Fortunately the damsel's tale was sooth. All had gone in the direction of Carsphairn—following, as usual, the chase, save some half-dozen, who were speedily sent out of the way when thou and thy companions were discovered. The damsel watched your arrival ; but not being prepared for so large a band, was for a

moment overcome; yet, as thou dost know, she is not easily frightened." I could gather farther from their discourse, that Wallace had been among them in these wilds frequently, and was in league with the outlaws, in some enterprise whose nature I could not discover. It is certain, however, that he is the only one of the Loudon men who knoweth of these people; for I heard him say he would not involve his cousin Reginald, by making him acquainted with their plans."

"Aha! friend Arthur," remarked the Lord Governor, looking at Heselrig; "our bolt hath not hit the mark; yet this information is most important. Hast thou any more to tell, Baldock?"

"Nothing, my Lord, unless it be that Wallace said he was going to Riccarton soon, for his uncle was taken ill, and he wished to see him."

"Then speed thee back, and be vigilant as a mastiff. Bring word if he doth change his quarters. Thy reward shall be great, if thou dost bring this mischievous Scot within the hangman's gripe; and methinks he is fast approaching it."

Baldock withdrew; and Piercy resumed.

"He spoke of a damsel; what can the churl mean by giving that appellation to some runaway serf? Heardst thou aught of her?"

"Nothing: some drudging wench, I believe, kept there by the outlaws for their own purposes."

Here the Lord and his follower bestowed each a glance on the other; and they were both able to interpret distinctly its meaning. That of the Lord said plainly, "I have no faith in thee, wherever a woman is concerned." That of the follower, "Dost thou suspect my double-dealing in this matter?"

"Now, Arthur of Heselrig," said the Governor, gravely, "if thou darest to deceive me—and thou knowest, in affairs of women I have reason to distrust thee—thou shalt incur my severe displeasure."

But Heselrig had gone too far to draw back; so he boldly averred that he knew nothing more of the matter.

"The man, doubtless," said he, "in giving the wench the title of a gentle dame, hath merely com-

mitted a blunder. I warrant me she is as coarse and ugly as a Scotch witch."

Lord Piercy and his principal followers, of whom Heselrig was one, were under the necessity of employing so many spies, that the practice operated on themselves, to make them suspicious of each other. The Lord told no more than was just necessary to his purpose; and the Knight, knowing the extent of his Lord's ramifications in the way of espionage, was aware that he withheld information about himself, that he had received, on occasion. He was the cleverest and most expert of all Lord Piercy's officers, besides being the best lance in his train; and thus, being of essential importance, the latter did not choose to cast him off without great provocation; and certainly the Knight had given sufficient, were it not for those considerations, to detach him from him completely.

" Sit thee down, Arthur Heselrig," said Lord Piercy; " matters of importance must be discussed by us without more delay. This affair, as thou knowest full well, is of too much consequence to

permit of the slightest deviation on thy part, on any consideration whatever, from instructions given. I have sure information that this youth, who I think must be the devil, in the likeness of a Scottish lad—this Wallace hath been, during the last month, within ten towns of Scotland, and thou mayest guess, as I do, on what errand. Thou knowest that, even in the short space he hath been at Cumnock, the Carrick district hath had more than one visit from him; and all unknown to his thick-headed kindred of Loudon, formerly so much suspected. This man is wary, wise, and politic, not only beyond his years, but beyond any one we have to cope with."

"It is not for me to dispute your opinion, my Lord," replied Heselrig; "but it doth seem to me that there is much of mere youthful wildness in these escapades of Wallace; it is making him too important to believe that he can influence a whole population."

"Now, by my soul, thou dost not think so, Heselrig. I know thou hatest him; but give thy judgment fair play. Here are accounts from St

Johnstown, Dundee, Dunbritton, Edinburgh, and others, all of the same tenor and purport—'Beware of William Wallace!'"

"Surely, my Lord, the extent of your intelligence in itself doth shew that he is neither very wary nor wise, else how doth he let any one likely to betray him know of his actions or of his purposes."

Lord Piercy grimly smiled at this observation.

"It suits me not, Heselrig, to tell thee all my plans and my secrets. Suffice it that two powerful agents in this impoverished and spirit-broken land are always effectual;—food with those who are perishing of famine—tortures with those whose stout hearts resist all other appliances. Marry, the latter have been felt and are known, and few like to experience them. The executioners of King Edward understand their work! Man who hath been seen conversing with this fellow is seized, is offered gold or food with one hand, and the boots and thumb-screws with the other. Some resisted at first, and died under the operation of the law. Subsequently, and now, finding our King will be

obeyed, those who are suspected either must escape from the district or speak out; in good sooth, to do them justice, many of the wretches have scorned the gold, though, to save themselves for their wives and children, they have given out information by slow degrees, as if it was their hearts' blood."

"These are stern measures, my Lord," said Heselrig.

"By my troth, I think so. To speak plainly to thee, this policy of our King goeth against my stomach; but what can I do? No one can turn him from his purpose; and if we, his governors in Scotland, declined to obey his instructions and resigned our offices, the law is still the same, and others would be found to carry it into effect. After all, they are but the common scum—the dregs of mankind; and if they are really rebels—that question is also between Edward and them—they deserve punishment."

"I think little of the people," said Heselrig, "whom, indeed, I like not; but the policy—I question the wisdom of this severity. You will make

Wallace a hero in their eyes, and his adherents martyrs!"

"Thou sayest truly; but it is needless to talk on this subject. I am but the King's officer, and must obey; yet it cannot hold long. Wallace must soon perceive—nay, I think he already doth suspect he is under espionage, and he will take care to secure his friends and himself: he hath cunning and sagacity for anything! I doubt me even if this information of Baldock's is not given him on purpose—that he was aware the latter was in the thicket the while. No one but I can know the address and dexterity of that knave!"

"That were a stretch of boldness indeed! But no, my Lord; I cannot think it is so. Baldock is artful too, and long used to his trade."

"Well! to-morrow morning we must adopt some course on Baldock's news. Meanwhile, hast thou heard from Lanark? Thy father is urgent to go to England next month."

"So he doth inform me, good my Lord. His private affairs in Northumberland demand his presence for some time, as he doth inform me. Long

absence hath exposed his lands to the depredations of the Scots and his feudal foes together, and he is anxious to obtain permission to retire, if his son is deemed worthy to be his representative in Lanark."

"This must be seen to—thou hast parts, Arthur, but, as thou knowest, art somewhat unstable."

Here an attendant entered to announce a messenger from the Captain of Cumnock.

"Bring him in," said the Governor; "doubtless he is sent to intimate what we know already," he added, as the page withdrew.

Presently a tall man entered, having the air of one not unaccustomed to the presence of great ones.

"What from Sir Reginald Crawford?"

"Health and fair greeting to the noble Lord Governor, and he biddeth me let him to wit, that he hath used all means at his disposal to root out the thieves and limmers who molest the people of his district, but hitherto he hath not been able to discover any of them, and he hath searched every

place, even the most secluded, to find them out,—the last being the dell of Afton, where nought was found save an old man and a maiden of tender years, quite unable to do a deed of spoil and rapine."

"It is well done and diligently. Wert thou of this expedition up the glen?"

"I was, my Lord."

"A wild spot, I have heard, and haunted, men say, by strange people."

"Even so, noble Lord. Rumour doth place one there of specially strange form."

"Ah, the giant! Dost thou believe in him?"

"There are who doubt not among us. The Harper avers that it is not to be doubted; and the Hermit of Amri is firm in his belief."

"Tell me the names of the men-at-arms who were with you; proper men, I hear, are those of our Cumnock garrison."

"Crawfords all, my Lord," as he went over their names; "saving one, who is so also by his mother."

"And his name?"

" William Wallace."

" Ah! I have heard that youth mentioned; stately and stalwart he is, and good at all his weapons,—is it not so?"

" True, my Lord."

" About thine own size, but fair as thou art black. Thou seest, friend, we take pleasure in hearing of brave men, though it may be this youth hath not acted so prudently on occasion as he ought to do—but let that pass. Doth Wallace remain with his cousin at Cumnock?"

" So I believe, my Lord; but it was said his uncle of Riccarton was ill, and he would soon go to enquire after him. He will return, doubtless, where his uncle of Loudon hath placed him."

" Thou art a Crawford?"

" Yea, my Lord."

" And of what house?"

" Loudon."

" But distant in thy connection, doubtless," continued the Governor in an easy gossiping tone, as if lounging over this conversation for amusement only.

" What maiden was this in Afton glen? Didst thou hear?"

" Various tales are told. One sayeth that she is a runaway serf; another, that she doth come from the Lanark hills, and doth no more than visit her kinsman in the glen; another"——

" And to whom may she belong in Lanark?"

" They say, my Lord, who hold to that tale, that she is a baron's daughter."

" Is she beautiful, this damsel, in thy sight?"

" As an angel, my Lord."

" So, so," continued the Lord Piercy, glancing at his confidant.

" Art thou a judge of beauty, fellow?" enquired the latter haughtily.

" Truly, we men of Loudon have little time to trifle with pretty maidens, and thou mayest be right in thinking I err."

" Speak intelligibly, fellow," replied the Knight still more haughtily.

" And who art thou, pray, that a gentle Crawford should not speak to thee as thou dost to him?" retorted the other, drawing himself up.

"Peace, vassals, both! thou dost strangely forget thyself," said the Governor, addressing Heselrig in particular. "Remember ye are in the presence of Lord Piercy." Thus saying, he assumed that degree of stateliness which all about him bowed to immediately.

The Crawford seemed singularly indifferent, however, and went on with his discourse as if nothing had occurred to discompose him.

"I speak not, my Lord, in regard to this maiden, on my own judgment; but it is well known in Cumnock that a knight of this household, whose taste is allowed to be good, declared her to be altogether surpassing and unrivalled, when he forgathered with her some weeks past."

"Dost thou remember the name of this gallant knight?"

"It was Arthur of Hesterrig, or Heselrig, the name hath partly escaped my memory; but so in some sort it sounded, and he did so express himself to the then Seneschal of Cumnock."

"If I ever saw this person, my Lord," said He-

selrig, in a tone sufficiently humble, "it must have been under another guise."

"Another time for that," said the Governor, aside, but very gravely. "We must discuss that alone. I know thou sawest her."

"It was merely from curiosity I asked these questions. What is it, good friend, as thou well dost know, what this wench may be, to the Lord Governor? Hear you aught of losses sustained by the yeomen in your quarter lately?"

"We hear less of them, my Lord."

"Hath the old Lord of Loudon repaired yet to Cumnock?"

"He tarried two days; but thinking the work suited younger men better, he left his son to rule in that district."

"With our permission he did. This maiden, doth she not remain in the glen?"

"She was to depart in two days, so her grandsire told our captain."

"Thou mayest retire, good friend; greet well the Captain of Cumnock. He hath our commendations for his diligence."

Lord Piercy, when the messenger retired, paced the apartment in moody silence, his follower standing reverentially, without daring to speak, so well he knew the temper of his lord. At length the latter made a full pause, and spoke to the other gravely, even sternly.

"Heselrig, thou knowest me not. Thou mightest have heard my reputation, though we have not been placed together heretofore; but thou hast not been long enough with me to know me so well as I know thee. Thy character is as clearly before me as if we had lived together for a score of years, and a strange mixture it is—bold, rash, wise, foolish, licentious, unscrupulous in attaining thy object—these thou art; thou art yet young, and years may improve thee; but this little scene hath shewn I am not to be deceived. Thou wilt know me better henceforth. I knew thou hadst spoken to this maid; that thou didst gaze on her, and speak of her as an object of desire."

"He is the Devil!" thought Heselrig to himself, but he preserved his humble attitude.

"Thou hast in thy nature materials which may

be moulded so as to be useful to me, and highly honourable to thyself, serving thy ambition, which is great, and raising thee high in place; but thou must weed out or keep in check those faults I find in thee, or thou shalt not long be follower of mine."

"My Lord, I am deserving of censure in this matter, in so far that I said nothing of this maid in reporting my progress through the Cumnock hills. But of aught else, of aught that doth make her of consequence in the eyes of my Lord, I am ignorant."

The Governor looked keenly at him. "Didst thou not know that she was of Lanark, and likely to be under thy father's rule; perhaps thine own? Dost thou know thyself so little as not to be aware thou wouldst sacrifice my interest and thy sovereign's, to compass the possession of a woman so beautiful?—Go to!"

"I knew not so much of her, so help me Heaven!"

"Then I have done thee wrong, so far, and I will so far make amends as to tell thee that I like thy good parts and esteem them, and would gladly see

thee cured of thy blemishes. No more of this at present. What thinkest thou of Sir Reginald's news?"

"Nay, it was forestalled—thanks to my Lord's omniscience—and I thought more of the messenger. Were it not that he is black-a-viced, he is the very image of his hated kinsman, this Wallace, and my gorge rose at sight of him."

"Indeed! Certes, he is a tall goodly personage; but it is evident these men of Loudon know not what an evil spirit they have among them; as little do they know, or doth Wallace know, how well that glen hath been explored by emissaries from me. Thou dost stare! I have more to entrust to thy confidence, but this is not the proper time. Yet, this much I will tell thee, there are guides known to me who can conduct a band so as to surround this outlaw, call him what they will; old man, maid, and all. Aha! what sayest thou to that, Arthur Heselrig?"

"I say, my Lord, be Wallace what he may, he hath found his match in cunning and address."

"Wit sharpeneth by exercise," replied the Go-

vernor, "but the business in hand must be despatched; attend me here two hours hence."

Heselrig bowed and withdrew in secret admiration of the knowledge and tact of his superior. It must be here remarked that he had been only a short time in Lord Piercy's household, and it was but now that the latter began to treat him confidentially, having discovered that he was not only far above the rest of his knights and 'squires in education, but in talent; and that, if he could cure him of his faults, especially of his loose and impetuous passion for every handsome woman in his way, he would be most valuable to him.

When Heselrig descended to the court, he found the messenger from Cumnock conversing with the men of the castle, apparently with great confidence and familiarity. He seemed to have much pleasure in listening to their tales of exploits performed on different late occasions; and at this precise period, one of them had just finished a rather lengthened narrative.

"By St George!" exclaimed the messenger in ecstasy, "it were something to serve a lord like this!

Yonder we are pent up in hold continually, or taken out, at best, for a run upon the hills after men that we can never find!"

"Dost thou desire, fellow, to take service with the Lord Governor?" struck in Heselrig, still preserving his air of haughty superiority.

"And to become thy fellow indeed?" replied the other. "Dost thou ask? Frankly, then, that would be little inducement. I like thy fellows better than thou, truly."

This was said with perfect composure and good humour, and most of the audience smiled at his coolness; but Heselrig, eyeing him with sour disdain, answered, "I can have no fellowship with such as thou; but if thou dost wish to have the Lord Piercy for a master, thou must shew more prowess than thou and thy comrades have lately exhibited."

"I pray thee, come thou, an' thy lord will permit, and try thy luck;—thou mayest meet with adventures there to suit thy yellow spurs, an' thou list!"

"As how? Thy people can find nothing."

"Thou mayest, perchance;—if not, we have a

young knight, fond of chivalrous sport, who will give thee exercise in the lists."

There was an expression in his eye, which, coupled with the daring coolness of his manner, conveyed an impression that he meant by this to insinuate a challenge to Heselrig. The latter cast a glance at him when he replied, that shewed he so understood him.

"Thou art presumptuous, sirrah! Match thee with thy mates; but thou mayest tell thy kinsman, Wallace, that I shall requite his late friendly deed to me, and that soon, even on the hills of Cumnock."

"Nay, Heselrig," said one present, "thou art discourteous to a stranger, who, till thou didst come, was the best good fellow we have seen for many a day."

"Let pass," quoth the Crawford; "I heed him not."

"The more courtesy dost thou shew. I prithee come with me; thou must need refreshment ere thou dost return—I am 'squire to the Seneschal."

"I give you hearty thanks; and, truly, I will go

with thee, the rather that I like thy pleasant converse; and when, I wonder, will this Knight take the road to Cumnock? I must tell Wallace of his good intentions. By my faith, he will find no boy's play with William!—Canst tell when he shall come? I long to see them together."

"That we know not. Our Lord telleth nothing till the hour of action; but thou mayest be sure from that, the time is not far distant, or Heselrig would not know it, favourite though he be."

The hospitable 'squire then conducted him to an apartment, where he was served with the necessary refreshment, and shortly afterwards rode off expeditiously to Cumnock. After riding a few miles, he stopped at a brook which crossed the road, took off his bonnet, then a false beard, and next began to wash his hair with great assiduity and success; for, in a few minutes, the black tinge vanished, and William Wallace was revealed in his proper person. Being particularly anxious to get into the interior of Ayr Castle, he had desired to be sent on this occasion; but not choosing to let his kindred know of his object, and his desire to be unknown

to Lord Piercy, he disguised himself on the road, as we have seen, with one of the pigments he had procured after great trouble and research, and which he was in the practice of using frequently. He was especially desirous that the Governor should not become acquainted with his appearance by personal observation.

On reaching his destination, he reported to his cousin the reception he met with,—the commendations of the Governor, and his friendly greeting, and ended with intimating that Heselrig might soon be looked for on some business of the former.

"And what may it be, trow?" enquired Sir Reginald.

"Who can tell—perhaps to view the country, as he did before,—perhaps to try the knightly adventure of the Ettin."

"Or rather, to see that we Crawfords are at our post, and doing our duty—ever suspicious is this Piercy."

Wallace shrugged his shoulders, and bade him "let the jaw go bye." "And now," continued he, "I must wend to Riccarton with to-morrow's dawn."

"Thou art ever restless; but if thou dost go now, thou must promise to return; thine uncle, else, will blame me."

"I shall bring his commands to thee,—he cannot think I am to let the old man lie on a sick-bed without enquiring after him; but I shall take all that on mine own shoulders, which are broad enough, as thou dost say sometimes, Reginald."

Wallace was missing that evening, for hours, at the castle, and it was said he had wandered far up the hills, to enjoy his favourite sport of fishing, for he was seen with a rod at Afton mouth; but the old Harper shook his head. His easily excited imagination soon connected Wallace with the mysterious inhabitants of the glen; and he was sure he held communication with them, although, garrulous as he was, he feared to say so.

CHAPTER VII.

With beaker's clang and harper's lay,
And all the olden time deemed gay,
That Chieftain feasted high.

Lord of the Isles.

When Wallace reached Loudon Castle, he found all the tenantry and household on the green, engaged in one of those "weapon showings" which the care and diligence of Sir Ranald had rendered very frequent within his bounds. Men-at-arms were careering at the ring, or training their steeds to the shock of battle. Archers were practising at the butts; and several bands of yeomen were exercising with the spear—that effectual weapon in the hands of Scotchmen in those days. These were trained to the schiltron, or close square, six or eight deep on all sides. Resting the butts of

their spears, which were eighteen feet in length, on the ground, when charged by horsemen, they presented a gradation of formidable points, varying from eighteen to three feet distant from the square, which the stoutest men-at-arms, if the spearmen were true to themselves, could seldom penetrate; and to which the archery of the southron alone were dangerous. Wallace, having dismounted, walked up to his uncle, whom he saw inspecting one of the schiltrons.

Sir Ranald received him with his usual cordiality, and gladly assented to the propriety of his leaving Cumnock to see Riccarton, assuring him at the same time that he had recovered considerably. "But of that we shall talk by and bye," continued he. "What thinkst thou now of these younglings? They promise well, dost thou not think? Seest thou where thou couldst make in there?"

"By my faith do I, uncle!" replied Wallace, laughing. "See here!" and he stepped up to one who had allowed his weapon to fall on the ground.

"How now!" cried the old Baron to Simon of Hilton, who was drill-master.

"Nay," said Simon in surprise, "what hath mazed the lad?—Take up thy weapon! Ah! by'r Lady, I see how it is! Come forth! come forth!" And at the word, a handsome young man rose from his kneeling posture, and walked hastily up to Wallace. "My dear master," said he, seizing, kissing, and hugging his hand, and almost embracing him.

"What, Cormack! is it thou? Can it be possible?" said Wallace, warmly shaking his hand. "How thou art changed!"

"Thanks to my kind Lord, and the good friends here."

"He is a good youth enough," said Simon, "and hath taken to his instruction more glegly than one would have expected in the unshorn colt he was, some few weeks agone."

"He hath an able teacher, Simon of Hilton."

"Ah, Squire William, thou ever likedst a gibe; natheless, it must be allowed that old Simon hath known his weapon since the day of Largs' fight, and before too."

"We have all heard that more than once,

Simon, but mind the matter in hand; talk not now," said the old Lord. And forthwith Simon re-formed his schiltron of untrained youth, and went through several evolutions, greatly to the satisfaction of Sir Ranald, and of Wallace too.

After a considerable space spent in warlike exercises, the numerous and variously-armed warriors were mustered in the great hall and on the green for a different task, even to a solid feast, consisting of more than one ox, and sundry barrels of beer. The party in the Hall comprised all who were of gentle blood, and the leaders among the yeomanry, with a stranger or two as visitors; the latter, with the family of the Baron, who, saving one, were children of tender years (their mother, being weak and infirm, seldom appeared in public), graced the dais or upper end of the table, with the gentry next to them, the salt vat forming the boundary between the latter and the yeomen. Substantial viands, with wine, ale, and mead, formed the fare, and the rough jest, and rougher repartee, the seasoning. The address and kindness of Sir Ranald in managing his followers were as remark-

able on this as on all other occasions. His eye and ear were both open to any thing that could mar the mirth of the party, and a word or two never failed to restore good humour.

After the eating was pretty well gone through, and the drink had done its part in raising their spirits, Sir Ranald called for some one to play the part of Minstrel. "Is there no one fit to take Borland's part?" enquired he. "Since he departed, neither song nor music hath been heard in our halls."

"There be none who can strike the harp, my Lord, but Ranald of Torringan; and he is yet too unskilled to venture in this presence," said a 'squire, casting a sly look at the youth he recommended, as if saying, "Now thou shalt not escape."

"Ay; let him!" muttered old Drongan; "he is like a young mavis—ever minting at his song, and never going through with it. E'en let him try; it may cure him of his constant cackling and chirling."

"Come! William, thou dost love no song."

"Thou canst relish no song since the wandering Minstrel sang thy raid into Carrick," said Torringan to Drongan.

"What raid, lad?" asked the Chief, laughing.

"Truly, my Lord, it was a raid of this surly laird of Drongan against our foes the Kennedies, at his own instance—at least, so it was meant, as the tale goeth; but it ended in despoiling an old woman of her cow; and men say she dwelt on the wrong side of the Doon, too—that is, on the Kyle side."

"Thou art a malapert boy," said Drongan, casting a furious glance at him; and thou shouldst know that such tales are unfit for this Hall, where truth alone should be ever spoken."

"I do but tell, at my Lord's command, the story as the Minstrel told it," replied the other; "and he said he got it on Doon water."

"No more, Will," said the old Lord, laughing still; "it is a fair response to thy disparagement of his minstrelsy. Thou must take and give, man. Thou knowest I have as little music in me as thou hast, and care not for it but to please the rest."

"I heed not the springald," said Drongan, sourly; "but, certes, he hath one gift of the minstrel quality,—that of making fables."

"Yea, truly, he was ready with his tale, it must be allowed; but come, Sir Childe, give us a strain of thy minstrelsy."

The youth, with some timidity, obeyed; and his ditty was such as might be expected from a beginner.

"Choice pastime, truly," grunted Drongan. "A blast of the swineherd's horn were to the full as good."

"Wouldst thou have a love romaunt or a virelay?" enquired Wallace, amused by his old friend's peculiar humour.

"Nay, William," replied he, "it is even said that thou hast taken to this foolery. An it be so, trust me, the Southron will soon hold thee right cheap. What can they care for a singing man?"

"Well! and do they not hold me but low enough now. What care I?" answered Wallace.

"No more of this," interposed the Baron. "Drongan liketh nought but plain tales, without

music or poetry, and there be more of his mind; so, if there be any one who hath a good passage of arms, that we have not heard before (with a glance at Simon), let him begin at once; and the more broken bones and cloven heads he doth bring into it the better."

"Then Simon of Hilton is the man," said a stranger present, without being aware of the salutary dread which his host entertained of the length of Simon's tales; "for he hath more songs and old stories than any one between this and the Solway."

"It pleaseth your honour, Auchinleck, to say so," replied Simon, from below the salt; "and I will not deny that I have pleasure in talking of the deeds of the olden time, especially when our forbears are the parties interested.

Without farther prologue, and raising his voice, he proceeded with his well-known tale of Largs fight. "Our good Lord was then a younker, and his sire led the Loudon men to that glorious field. Folks said, that being of the blood of those rievers, he would not fight zealously against them; but, I trow, if they of Norroway thought so, they changed their belief

before night. Our young Lord was with us too, and I was with my father, who held some charge among the spearmen; and we all went joyfully, as to a merry-making; for the spoiling Northmen had made havoc in the land, and we knew they were now in a sort of trap, by reason of the storm that would not let them move away. So, when we came within sight of their fleet, covering the seas round the Cumbraes, we raised a shout that made the welkin ring for miles round, and we were answered by our friends camped round our gallant King Alexander, who, alack for the land! is no more among us.

"Next morning there was great blowing of horns, and we could presently see that they were getting ready to land from their ships; and to be sure, before we got to the beach, they had sent to land a goodly number, who were ranged there. Well, down upon them we went. The King, with his nobles, glittering in fine armour, and our staunch Ayrshire barons, who headed their own men, following with their different battles. Schiltron after schiltron marched down upon them, till the tuilzie raged far and wide. The Loudon and

Auchinleck warriors fought that day in one schiltron, the chiefs and their men-at-arms supporting them. We stood stoutly to them, till a more than usually savage looking man, with an enormous mace, came towards us, followed by a score or two like himself. He was a giant in size, with a shining breastplate, and a helmet, from beneath which his yellow hair streamed over his shoulders like the mane of a Shetland horse. St Mary! how my heart dunted when this savage made direct for me. My father kept his eye on me, but said not a word. Our old Lord, however, seeing the danger, called 'Stand firm, Loudon!' and, to be sure, we made our stand like rocks; but ere I wist what was the matter, my senses forsook me, and, on recovering, I found myself lying on the ground, and the next in the ranks to me also there, with his brains beaten out. It was a mercy and a marvel mine went not the same way, for I got the first blow. My Lord said afterwards, indeed, I should be thankful for a thick skull; but that is neither here nor there.

"The schiltron had been broken, that was cer-

tain ; the wild man had plunged into it through the partial gap made by our fall. I got up, and, looking round, saw at a little distance the fearful mace still at work. I rose and made towards it, and, a few paces farther on, lay the Baron of Auchinleck, apparently dead, with his lance in the body of a follower of the man with the mace. Just then a voice struck mine ear, and, turning round, I saw our Lord lying beneath his horse. ‘ Alack ! ’ said I. ‘ Haste, younker, release me,’ cried he, in a strong impatient voice, that rejoiced me exceedingly. With difficulty I got the horse, slain by a lance thrust, removed, and up sprang the old Lord, as if refreshed by the accident. ‘ Follow me, Simon,’ he said. The schiltron was hard pressed, surrounded by a multitude of the enemy, but it had been re-formed by the assistance of our men-at-arms, who exerted themselves wonderfully, with our young Knight at their head. As we drew near, we were recognised. The horsemen charged through the Norwegians, took us up, and we were immediately among our friends again, whose shouts became furious, overjoyed, as they were, at the

rescue of the Baron, who was believed to be slain.

He looked only for the wild giant. 'No man can harm him, he is charmed,' cried several voices. 'He hath good armour,' said my Lord. 'Hath no man a mace?' A mace was found. 'St Andrew for Scotland!' shouted he, whirling it round his head, and charging full on the Northman, who, still unscathed, uttered a wild cry, and returned his blows; but our Lord was strong then, and still yawl, and contrived to parry and evade most of his strokes, till he saw an advantage; and, striking with his full force, he hit the giant on the headpiece, and caused him to stagger; then did he assail him quickly, with blow after blow, till he fell from his saddle; but, in doing so, he grasped our Lord by the neck, bringing him to the ground, and falling on him with his whole giant bulk, and we could see him draw a dagger from his belt. All of us held our breath, but our young Knight, spurring his horse, was with them at one bound. Presently up stood our gallant Chief. The lurdane lay still. He had merely

griped the dagger hand of the Dane, and held it fast, for he saw he was in the dead thraw. Then rose a shout worth hearing. You may be sure we soon cleared the ground after that; and Loudon's lord and Loudon's men were foremost in the mouth of our jolly King for long after."

"Well done, Simon; thou hast omitted a few flourishes this time; still the old man hath peeped out in that last escapade of thy minstrel faculty," said Sir Ranald.

"He is not far wide though," said Auchinleck; "for his tale doth agree with that which my sire was wont to tell. He never altogether recovered from his injuries of that day; but he delighted to speak of the battle nearly as worthy Simon hath done."

"My thanks are due for that," quoth Simon, looking highly pleased; "for it is my Lord's pleasure to deride my powers of telling this tale in especial."

Other tales followed, until the time arrived for those who did not belong to the household to seek their respective homes.

Wallace was not surprised, on cool reflection, to find Cormack so much improved. He had discovered in him, while in the woods, a great aptitude for acquiring knowledge, and he had taught him his letters in few lessons. This the chaplain of Loudon had improved into reading and writing, which was nearly the extent of the worthy priest's own learning; and his constant intercourse with civilized people had improved his language and his outward appearance, as we have mentioned. In fact, the mere trimming of his beard, and the cutting of his hair, had done wonders; then the doublet and hose assisted materially in doing the rest. He was much liked by every one in the castle, the unpretending simplicity of his manners still remaining unchanged. There was one piece of the Chaplain's information regarding him which did not please Cormack's young patron so well. Alice of Hilton had been frequently directed to assist about him, when he was confined by his wound; and an acquaintance thus began, which the Priest averred had ripened into a warmer attachment, at least on his part.

"Now, our Lady have pity on poor Cormack!"

said Wallace; "no baron hath greater regard to purity of blood than Simon of Hilton; if the one doth value his nobility, the other doth highly estimate his 'estate of yeomanry,' as he doth call it; and the maiden, too, now my Lady's gentlewoman, whose companions are all of best Crawford blood, she will sneer at the poor emancipated serf, doubtless."

"I make not so sure of that," said the Chaplain; "the maid hath sense to see that her young friends in my Lady's bower are above her, and doth give place to them on all occasions, which, indeed, they will take care of if she forget,—it is their due. Certes, she is the favourite of all, and that is a token that she comports herself properly; and it doth seem to me that she doth not altogether disdain this humble youth. But time will shew, and thou wilt discover for thyself."

CHAPTER VIII.

——— Aread what is that Lady bright,
That through the forest wandreth thus!
* * * * *
Forsoothe he was a selcouth sight.

Faery Queene.

HESELRIG, resolving to lose no time, in accordance with his Lord's instructions to carry out his intended attack on the stronghold of the outlaws in Afton, fixed on the second day after that on which Wallace had been at Ayr for the purpose. And, availing himself of the ample information possessed by the Governor, he so arranged the disposal of his band as to promise a triumphant success, and the capture of a great many depredators, which would not only add to his renown, but humble the unsuccessful Crawfords, and perhaps afford the means

of discovering proof of Wallace's secret machinations among the disaffected. In high spirits, therefore, did he set out, a little after midnight, with a strong force, in order that, ere day had sufficiently dawned on these misty hills, he might have all the passes beset, so as to render escape impossible.

The spies of the Governor had provided guides who were totally ignorant of the object of this excursion, which they regarded, probably, as some hunting expedition on a larger scale. A detachment was sent by Deugh Water to enter Afton Glen from the south. Another was sent by the Nype Hills to come into the valley from the east; and, according to the information he had received, Heselrig calculated that by this arrangement he would secure the entering of the glen at the several outlets, about the same time. He himself, with a small but select party, took the straight road to the spot where the Maid of the Glen had been seen by the Crawfords. She was the secret object of his constant admiration from the time he had seen her near the mouth of one of these outlets,

where she was evidently engaged in hunting, as she had two or three wild attendants with dogs, and she was attired like one who shared that amusement. Her singular beauty riveted his gaze, till she turned haughtily away, almost without bestowing on him the customary salutation. And Heselrig, recovering from his surprise at the sudden appearance of this beautiful vision, addressed her with great courtesy and deference, but he could not succeed in engaging her long in conversation. Disappointed and vexed, he rode moodily away; and being one who was capable only of the baser portion of the passion of love, he found an object in Alice of Hilton sufficient to occupy him for the time being.

But he was surprised afterwards to find how the image of this sylvan maid obtruded itself on him. He knew that, but for his numerous intrigues with women, he would enjoy the unlimited confidence of the Governor; and his chief anxiety on this journey was to devise some scheme by which she might be removed, without allowing him to know that she had been taken at all; for he did not doubt that

he would succeed in that, secretly, the principal inducement he had to undertake the expedition. He never for a moment dreamt or thought of the atrocity of the deed, apart from the risk of losing his Lord's favour ; nor did he value the resentment which her kindred, whoever they might be, should feel on the occasion. They would be only Scots, thought he ; and it would go hard with him, in the present condition of the country, if he could not make prize of a simple rural young woman, of no considerable rank. But Lord Piercy was strangely particular on that point, just as if a retainer could not do his duty to him and amuse himself as he liked best also. Musing long and anxiously, he at last hit upon a method, which was simply to consign her to the care of two or three who were devoted to him, and have her carried off to a castle within his father's jurisdiction, where he expected soon to rule also as he chose.

It was about the same hour at which Sir Reginald and his band reached the spot called Amri, that Heselrig also arrived there. The mist was down to the ground, and the party—with that silent

awe which the nature of the spot and the tales connected with it were so admirably calculated to produce on the strongest minds of that age, when no man was free from superstition—gazed on the thick fog without daring even to whisper each other; and as the gusts of wind came less frequently on this day, it lay longer than usual without undergoing any change, thus increasing their nervous feeling. After waiting for a considerable period, they were startled by the sound of a harp just in front of them, and, from the same rock where the figure of the maid had appeared before; immediately thereafter a clear and singularly melodious female voice began to sing—

Elves who guard each bubbling rill,
Spirits of the misty hill!
Listen to a maiden's lay
From this haunt of sportive fay.

If the eye of warring man
Dares our secret wilds to scan,
Ye who human power deride,
Tame the blood-stain'd mortal's pride.

This is Holy Nature's sphere,
Still her reign is boundless here:

None who break her sacred law
Safe may seek our wilding shaw.

The voice paused here. The mist was mounting steadily, and the growing light revealed the paler faces of the Southrons to each other, as they gazed intently on the rock which the fog, like a rising curtain, was slowly disclosing to them. As it ascended, the maiden was seen in the same spot, but seated under a tree, dressed as before, and with a small harp, or clairshach, in her hand instead of a bow. Heselrig stood like one entranced. The 'squire next him crossed himself devoutly, and "*Sancta Maria! ora pro nobis*," escaped from him involuntarily. "That can be no earthly maiden —such form, such face, in scene so savage man ne'er saw before."

"The voice, too, hath nought common in it, nor the song," said another.

Heselrig shook off the feeling that clung to him in spite of himself, arising, doubtless, out of the unsuitable appearance of the damsel to the place she was in, and approached, just as she arose with perfect composure, and seemed to await his address.

" Fair maid," began Heselrig, " may a stranger venture to intrude on thy solitude, craving pardon for so doing, in the discharge of a momentous duty?"

" Strangers obtain a welcome to our wilds ; it is all we can bestow on them, and rarely do they come."

" It must be because they dread the displeasure of one so lovely; didst thou but give a warmer welcome"——

" Stranger, what can an old man and a maiden give of welcome to bands of armed warriors, save the free passage of their rude abodes, and a God-speed them on their way ?"

" I would fain see the abode of so much beauty. Deign to admit me to thy habitation, sweetest of all dwellers in the wilderness," said Heselrig, waxing bolder, and drawing nearer to the base of the rock.

The maiden drew herself up, and pointing to the rude crags and hills around, said in a firmer tone than before, " Our abodes are the caves of the mountain, the shade of the forest tree, or the cold face of a rifted rock—all that the sons of the stranger have left us."

" Were they the sorriest dens in creation, they would be to me, blest by thy presence, more lofty than castle hall."

" Thy honied words are ill bestowed on the plain dwellers of the glen—pass on thy way, and heed us not!"

" Nay, leave us not yet, fairest; if we may not approach thee nearer, let us be happy in the sound of thy voice;" then, speaking in a whisper to the 'Squire,—" Search quietly for a passage up the rock; get up the men behind her—they are bolder now I see—and then do as thou wert directed. See! the mist is again coming lower; be cautious—she doth watch all our motions."

" What dost thou seek here," enquired she, " so far from the dwellings of thy people?"

" Say that I came once more to behold that face; thou must remember me—thou hast seen me before."

" It may be; but thou couldst not come on such errand here. What wouldst thou with the Maid of the Mountain?" enquired she.

" That should be told to thee alone," replied

Heselrig, thinking that she looked more beautiful than ever.

She smiled proudly. "Thou hast nothing to tell which I could listen to, and, I pray thee, talk not in that strain."

All this time she kept her eye intently on the band. They had discovered a passage in the rock; one had actually begun to enter on it, and she was seen in the act of applying the horn to her mouth, when, as the descending mist enveloped her, a low blast, in notes and tones extremely melodious, was heard from the bosom of the fog.

"What can she mean?" ejaculated Heselrig. The echoes of the hills repeated the sound, and were dying away, when another blast, loud, rough, and stern, breathing war and defiance, caused the whole band to start and pause.

"That was well blown," said Heselrig, seeing the necessity for encouraging his men. "Some trick, doubtless, of this crafty fair one. Would that infernal fog but keep up! Come, fellows," cried he aloud, "hang not back for such foolery—Courage!—up the rock, and seize our prize!"

The men thus admonished, pushed forward, gained the top of the rock, and were completely hid by the mist. In an instant afterwards, cries came from the spot, indicating surprise and terror.

"Back!" exclaimed a voice like the roar of a trumpet, — "Back, ye Saxon wolves!" Then was heard the sound of strife, amid the increasing exclamations of the Southrons, one of whom tumbled over the face of the precipice, and lay as if dead below.

"St George! Stand to it," called out Heselrig, as he and his 'squire, who alone were below, hastened to the scene of action. He was met at the opening in the rock by the whole of his men, retreating as fast as the narrow footpath would permit.

"It is the fiend!" said one.

"It is the witch's familiar!" cried another, in breathless fear.

"It is the Ettin of Blackcraig!" exclaimed a third, as he staggered and fell on the ground; "no one but he could deal such blows."

The tide of affrighted people fairly pushed Heselrig back into the open area.

"See! see!" cried the 'Squire, aghast.

Heselrig looked up. The capricious mist, again ascending, gave to view a gigantic figure, standing out on the edge of the cliff, partially obscured by the fog. His size appeared immense. His only dress seemed to be a plaid wrapped loosely round him; but his body was covered with red hair, like that of a wild beast; the hair, too, of his head and beard, was of great length, hanging over his neck, shoulders, and breast, and he was obliged to clear it away from his eyes frequently, as he gazed on the astonished party below. His only weapon seemed to be a heavy and knotted club, and his left hand rested on the rim of a large shield. Heselrig was as bold as most men of that day, but he was for a moment startled out of his usual nonchalance by this apparition.

"St Cuthbert of Ferne!" he ejaculated, crossing himself, "what monster is this?"

"The Ettin, beyond all doubt," replied his 'squire, a young man who had his full share of su-

perstition. "We shall be shent! See! he is about to speak!"

"What want ye here, men of England? Is it not enough that ye have reft from us our lands and homes, but ye must seek to deprive us of the refuge which Nature allows to the destitute?"

"And what art thou, so grim and barbarous, to care for the habitations or the rights of men? Thy place, sure, hath always been the wilds?" asked Heselrig in return.

"Thou and thy kind, foul minion of a tyrant, would bring all men to the level of the beasts. Avaunt! quit my sight! Nature is sick of such as thee, and the pure air of these hills polluted by thy presence."

He raised his club in a threatening attitude.

"He is some overgrowth of a savage Briton, my friends, and nothing else," exclaimed Heselrig, cheerily. "Be not dismayed; at him again!"

They still held back, however.

"Try him with the broad arrow," called out one of the band. "He hath no armour."

The suggestion was adopted, and two yeomen

drew their bows at the same instant. The figure, with a careless motion, raised his shield; and, as the arrows flew straight to his body, dashed them aside with a scornful air.

"Try him again," cried Heselrig.

It was done, and with the same result. The men shook their heads, muttering something about "the futility of fighting with a servant of the devil—better retire and leave him."

"Surely, my men, you would not do me—do yourselves that shame," cried Heselrig, seriously alarmed by this unusual faint-heartedness. "Do not imagine he is aught but human; and, to convince you of it, I shall encounter him with mine own arm."

"By the mass!" muttered one of the men, a little way from Heselrig; "He will meet with his match there."

"Beware! beware!" cried another, as the giant raised a stone in his hand, and poised it, in act to throw. It was a fragment of rock like a man's head, and it was hurled directly at Heselrig, who received it on his helmet, and fell senseless."

" Ha! down with the tyrants," shouted the Ettin ; " down with them!"

Stone after stone followed, and a man went to the ground with almost every one, until, paralysed by superstitious fear, the remainder took shelter in the narrow approach through which they had reached the spot. After a moment's reflection, compunction arose in the mind of the 'Squire, and shame together, which partly mastered the sensation of fear.

" I am loyal 'Squire," said he; " and I must not leave my Knight to the mercy of this monster, fiend though it be."

So saying, he stepped out again to the open space, and was followed by most of the rest, with pale faces and chattering teeth. But the Ettin was gone! and nothing to be seen but their wounded leader and comrades on the ground. Heselrig was still insensible, but life was not extinct; and they were yet deliberating what to do, when one of the other parties arrived. The men of it were struck with astonishment and consternation, but they gave fresh courage to their friends by

their presence; and, after a little, it was resolved to take this Ettin dead or alive, as they were sufficient to do it, and it would be a lasting disgrace should they be all foiled by him. But, after a long and tedious search, during which the third detachment arrived, and joined in it, they were obliged to abandon all hopes of finding either the Ettin or the female, and turned their steps towards Cumnock Castle, firmly convinced that they had, that day, dealt with two spirits of evil. Not a single human being had been seen by the bands which arrived last on the ground.

CHAPTER IX.

* * * *
O Scotland! shall it e'er be mine,
To wreak thy wrongs in battle line;
To raise my victor head and see,
Thy hills, thy dales, thy people, free.
Lord of the Isles.

"CORMACK," said Wallace, one day when they were alone, "come with me, I have to say to thee."

They retired to a lonely place.

"Here," continued he, "is a paper, by which the services of Cormack, the son of Gilcolumb, the son of Farquhar, are made over to me. Thou and thy posterity are, by this deed, my property for ever."

Cormack knelt before him, holding up his hands joined together, and thus indicating an acknowledgment of the duty he owed him.

" Up, free man!" cried Wallace, with glowing eye. " O! would to God I could raise from crushing thraldom, thus easily, the prostrate thousands of my countrymen!"

Cormack sprang upright, as if electrified, gazing intently on him.

" This paper also," continued Wallace, " contains a deed of enfranchisement, duly executed, signed and sealed by me. Take it, my friend! and when the proud one scorns thee as a slave, stand thou erect before him, and say, ' Hail, brother! I am thy fellow man.' "

Cormack, as if actuated by the same feeling, drew himself up, in accordance with direction.

" Ay, that will do! Something tells me that the poor serf shall one day shame the haughtiest of the land!"

" O my master," cried Cormack, " you have made me a new man! What shall I do for you? Never, never shall I, with my own consent, leave your side." And the poor fellow wept like a child.

" Hark ye," replied Wallace, " thou shalt share weal and woe with me; thou shalt share weal and

woe with thy oppressed country, for to it art thou with me devoted. I know thy heart, and am sure thou dost participate in all my feelings."

"May God favour me, as I am true to thee, and sink me to perdition when I prove ungrateful!" replied Cormack energetically.

"Enough! I know thee," said Wallace. "And now, my friend, I will unfold to thee some part of the plan which I, a simple youth of thine own age, have formed, it may be presumptuously, for the liberation of our country."

He then explained to Cormack that, in his opinion, until there was a fair prospect of success, the leading men of Scotland would enter into no conspiracy against the foreign domination that oppressed them; because an unsuccessful rebellion against Edward would bring them to utter ruin, by the forfeiture of their estates in both countries. "The stake is too great," said he, "to place on a single hazard; but if those of the people are engaged in it, who are free to choose for themselves, with the inferior nobles or gentry and the burghers, who have no property in England, we may draw

the great ones of the land along with us—we must, in short, begin at the feet in place of the head, reversing the usual order in such cases."

"And the serfs are the very sole of the feet," said Cormack.

"True; and there is a difficulty. Thou canst understand, Cormack, that although it is most likely the people of that class were originally placed in bondage by iniquitous measures, the law has sanctioned that condition; and those who are now entitled to the services of serfs, may have purchased—as indeed most have—without sharing in the guilt of enslaving, them; therefore, it is unjust to wrest from a landholder his serfs without remuneration."

"It is justly said," remarked Cormack.

"But," continued Wallace, "if we gain the smaller proprietors, we must begin by representing the necessity for emancipating those people to strengthen ourselves, leaving the equivalent to a grateful country; and the same reasoning would suit the great proprietors, who, thou knowest, would have the means of securing to themselves the

value of their serfs, they being the legislators of the land. In short, for some time, I have been engaged in instilling this doctrine into the ears of as many, and they are very numerous, as I could venture to discuss the question with. And thou wilt be exceedingly useful to me, in going secretly among people, as I do, for I have discovered that thou canst hide thy native shrewdness in an outside appearance of uncommon simplicity; and, in this, with thy stout and trusty heart, I place my chief reliance for success through thy assistance."

"I fear," said Cormack, "my aid must be feeble indeed, in a cause so great: but I am ready and willing to undertake any thing, even to the death, for thy sake."

"Not for me," said Wallace; "but for those wretched objects whom we have talked about in the woods of Riccarton. For those, who like thyself, have felt the iron rod of oppression, the bitter curse of southern cruelty. It was our conversation about them, Cormack, which induced me to think of thee in my wanderings."

" And men will say, that the rude serf is a strange confident in such high undertaking."

" So they may; but I have confidential advisers too, of a different sort, yet none whom I can better trust than thou. Thou must not breathe a word of what may pass between us to a Crawford. This Governor doth suspect me, and he doth watch the whole kindred. If the latter should be privy to our schemes, mine uncle would be the first victim. I design to bring in the good old man only when the country shall be up in arms; for, to act otherwise, would be to take an ungenerous advantage of my connection with him."

" But," said Cormack, " it doth seem strange to me that thou shouldst intrust thy inmost secrets with one who like me is so little skilled in things of consequence—so unused to intercourse with men."

" In good sooth, friend, I do not expect much aid from thy counsel until thou hast gone more among the people we are to deal with; but thou must know that I can trust thee as I would trust myself; and it doth seem to me, that in talking to

thee, I am but communing with my own thoughts; but thou dost fully comprehend my aim and object?"

"Clearly and distinctly, because we have so often in you lone forest talked of the sufferings of our people, and kindled into passion, as if moved by the same spirit, when so engaged."

"Just so; and in carrying out my purpose, people of the class thou didst originally belong to, must be mainly instrumental."

"And it doth appear to me, that, although we have been kept in bondage, we and our sires, from time immemorial, unjustly; still it would be doing an act of injustice to one class, in order to do justice to another, to set them free without the consent of their lords, who are innocently, and under sanction of the law, entitled to their services."

"Precisely what I told thee a little while since. Thou dost understand it thoroughly; and, in order to get their lords to agree, we must point out to them the vast advantage of national independence—the dreadful evils of a permanent tyranny like that of the English Edward, which would reduce, even

our nobles, to a condition little better than that of serfs; and, if the great object of national emancipation is effected, I doubt not but the country would gratefully secure the effectual and permanent enfranchisement of those who are so efficacious in relieving it from thraldom. Seest thou?"

"Perfectly; in brief, your object is to emancipate the serfs in the first place, their masters agreeing."

"Exactly so. And already are there some who have gained their freedom from their lords, who are resolved to risk all for the redemption of enslaved Scotland. On the Cumnock Hills is a small band already mustered, and there are more in those wilds than thou dost know of, even a noble maid, beautiful and brave as the spirit of freedom itself, and another, whose lot hath been a sad one for many years."

"And this damsel, my master, surely it must be grievous misfortune that hath banished her to a place which thou hast described as so remote from the habitations of men."

"Even feudal rage, my friend, arising out of

hatred and revenge cherished for many bygone years. The Jardines of Annandale poured like a tempest from the mountains of Moffat, on her father's broad lands in Lanarkshire, harried them, slew her sire and brethren, and finally wrested the barony to themselves, obtaining from the Southrons such right as they can bestow. She hath dwelt since, and it was by miracle she herself escaped, with another outcast equally unfortunate; for Birnok, a leader of the Jardines, would fain secure another title to the lands by the hand of their heiress."

"And how did my master know this lady?" enquired Cormack.

"We are akin to each other, and her family were known to me of old; but we shall speak more of her another time."

Cormack smiled.

"Nay, by my faith! thou art too shrewd for me, friend; but I pray thee, hast thou seen the daughter of the Goodman of Hilton, Cormack? Men say she hath grown into a comely maiden?" Cormack turned his head aside.

"I think thou must have seen her at the Castle," replied he.

"Perhaps; but I would know what thou dost think of her? is she not passing fair?"

"Indeed she is."

"Dost thou not think she is fortunate in having escaped from the reiving Southron? I will tell thee, too, about him. He hath been here but some few months; and already hath he destroyed two innocent maidens, and rendered two hearths desolate and miserable. He is a sort of monster, seemingly sent by the foul fiend, to prey upon female happiness; for he never casts his eye on a likely form that he doth not covet—never covets but he doth seek to possess, by the readiest means at hand; treating with scorn and indifference the feelings of parents—the laws alike of God and man; and above all, the agonized feelings of his wretched victims, because they are Scots."

"God will one day requite him," said Cormack.

"Unfortunately for those under this Governor, Heselrig hath so gained his confidence, that he doth find little difficulty in hoodwinking him, vigi-

lant though he doth think himself; even his spies, I lately learnt, are in many cases controlled by Heselrig, and instructed as to their intelligence. Now, this Southron Lord, hard and little merciful as he is to the enemies of his King, hath yet a becoming sense of propriety with him in regard to the affairs of his government; and he is zealous and faithful in the discharge of what he doth imagine to be his duty to this tyrant; therefore he would resent these practices of his vassal as injurious to the cause of the Southron, if he was made aware of them; but such is the cunning of this knavish Knight, that beyond the character which he brought from England, he knoweth nothing."

"It is pity he knoweth not of those cases."

"I thought so, my friend, and had the facts communicated in such a way, that I believed he would give credit to them; but Heselrig managed, with his usual cleverness, to persuade him it was only a proof of his zeal in behalf of his country, which the Scots fearing had made up the tale to injure him with the Governor. Nay, it is strange, that one so shrewd and sagacious should be so

swayed by another, as this Governor is by his favourite retainer."

Wallace having, from his intimate knowledge of this humble friend, the most perfect confidence in his fidelity, resolved, by conversations like the foregoing, to instruct him in the part which he meant him to play in the wild and somewhat chimerical scheme he had formed for the liberation of his country. That it was so, his own good sense suggested to him; but at the same time, his sanguine disposition would ever urge him onwards—and then would come the reflection, that his countrymen could scarcely suffer more than they did; and that he should therefore persevere, even if his prospect of success was obscure and uncertain, while there was but a chance of throwing off the yoke. We shall soon see that Cormack, instructed in the rare arts of reading and writing the English language with wonderful facility at Loudon, was not slower in comprehending and suiting himself to the plans of his patron and supporter.

CHAPTER X.

Go to! thou art a counterfeit cowardly knave!
* * * Why dost thou grovel on the ground?
SHAKESPEARE.

IT was market-day in the town of Ayr—and the streets were crowded with people from various districts of the country. The wild looking men of the upland districts, and of Carrick and Galloway, speaking the ancient language of the land, mixed freely with the Saxon of Lower Cunningham and Kyle, who generally had some knowledge of the Celtic, from their neighbours and their menials; but, on such days, the difference of race was apt to give rise to frequent brawls and bloodshed. Seldom did such occasion pass without both, the immediate cause being the preference, which it was suspected, the officers of the Seneschal shewed to those who were of southern descent, in dealing for supplies of

provisions to the garrison, which, being the principal source whence the demand for cattle and horses, together with corn, emanated, led all parties to turn their eyes especially in that direction (for where the Governor resided, the Southrons paid better for their provisions than the impoverished natives), and to watch with jealousy the proceedings of others, with the important functionaries who negotiated its purchases.

A rough looking personage, with a huge sheep-head-hilted broadsword at his side, came elbowing his way through a crowd, near the cross, where one of the officers in question was bargaining for some fat oxen, and without much ceremony, in fact rather like a man who was somewhat angry, enquired if the officer wished for more cattle?

"No, truly, friend, I do not want thine now," was the answer.

"And wherefore, I pray thee?" enquired he respectfully enough.

"Because I met with beasts that suit me better than thine."

"But mine were bought, and are by this at

the Castle; I was looking for thee to get my money."

"And thou mayest look long enough, I tell thee; these are better than thine, man."

"But I say," replied the other, "I have missed the market through thy means, and it is no more than just that mine should be taken also."

"Poh! thou art troublesome."

"I do but ask what is just," said the Scot, looking round him; but he met only cold glances among the crowd, who were surprised that he would venture to bandy words with a person so important; yet there was one man who was bold enough to hint that it would be "a black loss to the poor man."

"Black loss or white loss," quoth the facetious Southron, "it is none of thine; so hold thy tongue, if thou wouldst keep both thine ears."

The intruder turned pale at these words, and slank away.

"Stand farther off," cried the impatient officer, a little chafed, to the injured man, and giving him a push as he spoke. The latter quietly gave

way; but as if involuntarily, his hand lighted on the sheep head of his sword hilt.

"Ha, knave! this to me! Knowest thou what thou art about? ha!"

"I did mean nothing," said the other, quietly, almost humbly.

"*Mean!* what care I for thy meaning, carle? There, follow thy skull-cap, goodman delver." So saying, he took off the man's bonnet, and sent it skimming among the crowd.

But this was too much for the patience of the individual, and the broadsword was drawn ere cool reflection came. A friend behind called out, "For God's sake take care, Dugald! Pull him back, some one! Hold him!"

A few gathered round and between him and the Castle functionary; but the greater portion of the crowd fled from the spot like quicksilver. Meanwhile, the officer regarded the now furious countryman with a grim and sarcastic smile, and turned away. Recollecting himself immediately, the Scot slowly returned his sword to the scabbard, and, deeply groaning, muttered, "My home! my wife

and children shall suffer for this! he doth know me too well."

"And wert thou not rash, and like a madman, to beard him here?" said a friend.

"Alack! friend, I am but a man; we should be saints to bear all that is put upon us."

"Come with me," said another, a very tall man, in a soothing tone, "into this hostelry, where we shall talk over some other matters. Think not of the proud Southron."

The poor man, as he cooled in temper, became more distressed in mind; but he met with comforters he little expected in his tall friend and his companions, only one of whom he knew.

The tall man was a stranger to him; but he was observed on that day to be singularly active in stilling tumults of all sorts, and always by removing the Scot from the scene, when the quarrel originated between one of the latter and a Southron. In another part of the town, a number of people, among whom were several of the garrison, easily known by their dress, collected round a large stout man, who lay on the ground, and in the most

taunting and provoking manner offered his back to any Scot (but no Englishman) who would pay him the sum of one penny for a blow with a quarter-staff as heavy as he could inflict. This personage was a sort of strong man, bully, or prize-fighter, in the garrison; and the mode he adopted of shewing his scorn of the Scots, and of earning money for himself, was quite in accordance with the spirit of the times among the class to which he belonged. He used a sort of rowley-powley harangue, well adapted to raise the wrath of the Scots; and many of them tried their strength on the broad back of the bully, but departed sadly humbled, and followed by a shout from the South-rons present, and a hearty laugh from the person on whom his wrath was expended.

"These Scots," cried the fellow, "have not the pith of cats."

"Because their food is all devoured by thee and thine," exclaimed a voice from the crowd.

"The more fools you to allow it, that is, if ye can prevent it," said the man, with another laugh. "Come along; come, my gallant Scots,—only one

penny! and ye may strike with all your heart and soul, taking revenge on the false Southrons that eat your food, and make ye as feckless as mice. Come! I wonder how many Scots go to the making of one Englishman! Let me see! I think I could match ten of them in even fight, for my own share, —yes, about ten, I think. Come! strong Scots, strong men, destroy the saucy Englishman; waste a little of your great strength on him that doth laugh at you. Come, my mighty men, only one penny! Thou art big and burly enough to have some little spunk in thee, though but a Scot. Wilt thou try?"

This was addressed to the tall countryman we have already noticed, who was looking quietly on.

"Why dost thou, a stout man, grovel on the ground like a beast? Canst thou not rather fight the people thou dost jeer so?"

"Marry would I, and gladly, if any would come forward, and I think I may venture to take up ten, as I said before; but where are they?" enquired he; "wilt thou make one? I warrant me thou canst fight with thy teeth and nails now."

" Aye, and with spear and buckler too."

" Spear and buckler ! thou hast heard the words somewhere, doubtless ? "

" Or this little plaything," said the tall countryman, " an' one might meet thee on a hill side not here."

" A fair challenge, Gilbert," cried a Southron, laughing ; " by the Lord, thou art in bad case now, to underlie such a perilous cartel."

" Yea, truly ; I may take a turn with thee, friend, after my play is over, an' thou canst keep up thy courage so long."

" By St Andrew will I ! and e'en join in thy play, too ; there is my penny, give me thestaff.''

" Now spare him, strong one, do not break his back," said the same Southron, laughing heartily, and the bully joining him, though not so vivaciously. There was something in the aspect of the Scot, as he took the staff, that impressed him with a degree of fear, and the result justified it. No sooner had the blow descended, than the luckless bully gave a loud yell, and then lay still and motionless.

"Saints in Heaven! is it possible?" cried a Southron. "Can his back be broken by a Scot?"

He shewed no signs of returning animation, and the Southrons began to scowl furiously at the countryman, and then openly to vent their rage in words.

"Thou hast slain our strong man," said one. "Vile Scot! thou must pay for it."

"I pray you to remember," said the latter calmly, "that I only answered his challenge to all of my country, and if he is killed, which I do not believe, it hath happened in the fair course of play. I am blameless."

"Thou shalt to the Castle, to answer it to the Seneschal."

"Nay! nay! this were hard measure to a man who hath his bestial to look after at the fair."

The hubbub increased, notwithstanding the cool demeanour of the countryman; and "down with the rascal Scot! Slay an Englishman, indeed! An' he go not to the Castle, have at him, gallants! with your staves—Slay him where he stands!"

were heard on all sides, while the crowd increased; and blows were soon aimed at the successful, yet luckless player at a dangerous game, who unexpectedly found himself involved in a squabble with people whom he was most anxious to avoid, the followers of the Governor.

"What a plague," thought he, "had I to do with this villanous bully," while he prepared, nevertheless, to defend himself as well as he could by placing his back to the wall of the nearest house, and calling his friends around him, one especially, who had been seen with him the whole day, and who now ranged himself beside him. The Southrons contented themselves at first with using staves only, or the butt ends of spears, and the countryman parried their strokes with much steadiness and address, until his companion fell at his feet, prostrated by a blow on the head. As he bestrode him, he perceived the man who had brought him to the ground, heated apparently by the contest, aiming the point of his spear at him, as he lay defenceless, while others redoubled their exertions against himself, till his wrath was also roused,

and he struck the man with the spear over the head so heavily, that his skull was shattered like an egg-shell, and the quarter-staff broken in two pieces.

The countryman was dressed in a doublet of home-spun gray cloth, with coarse worsted hose, and had a broad bonnet on his head, which he wore far down over the ears, so that his features were little seen, until at this stage of the fray, he received, at the same instant, a blow on the head, that carried off the bonnet, and a spear-thrust in the side, which ripped open his doublet. A momentary pause ensued, while the crowd scanned him eagerly and curiously.

"St George to speed! the knave hath an iron knapscull under his bonnet; and see! if he have not a secrette also! a steel-shirt, my mates, beneath his hodden-gray."

Cries of surprise ensued; others pressed forward to see this disguised person, and, among the rest, our acquaintance, Watt of Badley, who, now quite restored, just then arrived on the scene of action, and, gazing for an instant at

the pretended countryman, exclaimed, in an eager tone—

"It is Wallace, the Sheriff's nephew! I rede you all take care of his arm, my friends; keep a little off, and bore him with your spears; he hath but a sword."

Great was the astonishment, for the fame of Wallace had already been pretty widely spread, as a youth of vast strength and great courage. During the pause, our friend Cormack arose from his master's feet, in the garb also of a decent yeoman, but so altered in appearance since their last rencounter, that he was unrecognised by Watt.

At the noise and repetition of Wallace's name, many of his friends ran to the spot; and, as the number of Southrons also increased, a serious tumult was the consequence. Wallace, exceedingly annoyed by the occurrence, was most anxious to escape, and expressed himself to that effect among his friends, but it was almost impossible, the crowd of opponents being so dense. The conflict now raged along the street. The friends of Wallace, aware of his object, charged desperately in one

particular spot, and actually forced their way through, but they were followed by a still increasing body of Southrons, and obliged to fight obstinately, until they got near the bridge, where a party succeeded in getting before and intercepting them; while, at the same instant, a body of men arrived from the Castle for the purpose of suppressing the riot. The case was now desperate with the Scots. Wallace became furious, and at every blow levelled a man, while his adherents were also falling beside him. At last, worn out and faint with wounds and fatigue, he fell under a party who all charged him at the same moment, and directed their strokes solely at him. He lay motionless, and to all appearance dead, while his friends dispersed almost unheeded; so much were the Southrons occupied with this formidable champion.

It was now dusk, and just as the conflict ended, Heselrig rode up with another band. He was greatly rejoiced by the news; and as it was necessary that all the bodies should be inspected in broad day, he directed that the dead should be

thrown into an open space, at the river side, used as a deposit for dung and offal of all sorts. After the slain Scots were deposited in this place, and a small guard placed over them for the night, Heselrig directed proper persons to make known, in the town, that any one who endeavoured to remove a body should be held guilty of treason, and punished accordingly. He thus sought to ensure the fate of Wallace, and at the same time to heap indignity on his remains. After every one had departed from this spot, and tranquillity was completely restored, the men who were left as a guard began to converse freely on the subject.

"A stout fellow, comrades, that Wallace; no play with him," said one.

"Ay, truly," replied another. "By Bevis of Hampton! his blows fell, like the sledge-hammer of a smith. No man needed a second where the first went."

"It is pity of him, Scot though he was; trust me, my mates, this knight Heselrig hath felt his

arm, or he would not expose the body in this manner. It is poor spite."

"Hush, man! I think so too, but speak not so loud."

Here a stranger struck in.

"A cold night, friends; may one ask why you are stationed here, partisan in hand?"

"Surely; it is no secret," replied one of the men, and proceeded to relate the facts.

"And is it possible that you are here to guard the town from dead men, and in such a night too! I pray you come with me. Leave one man; it is surely enough for the occasion; and come to my lodging hard bye for a stoup of wine, or a flagon of ale, in return for which you shall tell me of the fray, for I long to get all particulars."

"What! leave our post! begone with thee! begone! lest we be tempted to give thee payment for thy insolence."

And they shouldered their halberts, and walked about manfully. The stranger withdrew, but he could see they were casting wistful glances after him.

" Another hour," thought he, " of this sharp cold will suffice."

When the inhabitants were wrapped in sleep, this wily person returned, under pretence of enquiring after a friend, who he had discovered was engaged in the affair, and perhaps had fallen.

He succeeded in enticing them into a corner out of the cold wind, where he liberally gave out, from a flask he had brought, the welcome liquid. They were scarcely out of sight of the slain men more than two minutes, yet next morning the body of Wallace had disappeared,—a fact which irritated and mortified Heselrig exceedingly, as he had, in the pride of his heart, gone directly to the Governor, on the preceding evening, and informed him of the death of William Wallace, whom the latter was so anxious to get within his grasp, and upon whom he had hitherto been unable to fasten any particular act of treason, although he knew he was hatching it. The Governor did not conceal the pleasure the news gave him, and told Heselrig that this fortunate event would make up for the late unhappy failure in the Cumnock Hills, which had

surprised and vexed them both beyond measure, and had spread consternation among all the troops of the garrison, the account given of the giant, by their comrades, being so dreadful. Piercy had, in fact, ever since the occurrence, been actively engaged, by means of his spies, in trying to discover what became of the men on that occasion, who, he knew by certain information, had for some time occupied the fastnesses of the hills, and whom he sent Heselrig to capture; but hitherto he had met with little success. The spies could give no account of the Ettin, and some of them were inclined to believe, with others, that the whole glen and its population were under the influence of magic; and that the beautiful witch could conjure up any figures she chose, whether in the shape of a single giant, or fifty wild men of the mountains. It was the same to her, equally easy,—perhaps the alteration of a single note in the gamut of that enchanted horn would make the change. Doubtless all the devils at her command knew it.

It is hard to tell how far even the more enlightened mind of Heselrig and his Lord were under

the influence of the belief in magic on this occasion. Certainly, the uniform account given by the men, of the preternatural beauty she possessed, and the strange melody of her voice, was calculated to make an impression unfavourable to the earthly nature of this damsel. The daring character of Heselrig's disposition enabled him to throw off every feeling of the sort that obtruded itself, especially when it stood in the way of any object of pleasure he sought to obtain; yet he seemed occasionally, by his remarking, that it "was passing strange," "out of the common way," and so forth, to shew that he was not free from doubt on the subject. From the subsequent conversation of the Governor, it is probable that if he had doubts regarding the human nature of the people who inhabited that glen, they were confined to one party there.

"Heselrig," asked he, next day, "wouldst thou make thy fortune by marriage?"

"Yes, my Lord," was the answer. "Surely, provided my wife should be one that would not interfere with me much."

" Which doth mean, I presume, that you would desire to sway her as you might think proper. Why, every man should rule his wife; and if she lets you do more than that, and with discretion too, she is no true woman."

" But I meant, with submission, to insinuate that, in the article of spirit, she should not be a true woman, for, in good sooth, I could not stand her chiding. May I enquire wherefore hath your Lordship put the question?"

" For this reason; there is a richly-endowed heiress, of birth and blood equal to thine own, whom I should like to see united to a true subject of King Edward."

" That I surely am; but it will be small recommendation to a fair damsel, my Lord," said he, smiling.

" Nay, thou must recommend thyself; yet, as she is a Scot, there will be less ceremony in the courtship, especially as she is or should be a ward of the Crown."

" A Scot," muttered Heselrig, with a look of

disappointment; "in truth I love them not, male nor female."

"Come," said Piercy, "Arthur Heselrig, thou art misrepresented, if any pretty woman, Scot or Southron, would be disagreeable to thee."

"Yea, that may be true, in some sort; but a wife is another matter."

"Mark me," said Piercy, "I did speak bluntly and plainly to thee lately about this damsel of the Cumnock Hills, and not without sure information, thou hadst seen her, and was struck by her beauty. Then, the promise had been given to another, who, though a Scot, was a firm friend of our Sovereign, and it was my duty to prevent thee from following her. He is no more, and the course is open to any deserving subject."

Here he paused and smiled.

"What! is that damsel, then, and this rich heiress, the same?"

"Even so. Unless there be another in those wilds resembling her, which I can hardly believe."

Heselrig perceived at a glance the immense advantage which he gained by this overture; and,

with an air of great frankness, admitted that he had been captivated by the beauty of the damsel on that day, but had not thought of prosecuting "the adventure" after the admonition of his Lord.

"Thou hast been a man of much gallantry, Heselrig, and thou shouldst know the arts by which youthful maidens are ensnared; and I would rather that thou could'st gain her consent freely than that the authority of her king, as overlord, should be employed, in the present state of this country."

"Why, to speak the truth," replied the other, "I have not been accustomed to use long courtship in my affairs—military men have scant time for it."

"That is to say, those thou hast dealt with were of a different class; for thou art not one of the beautiful youths who slay young women by a look."

"No, my Lord, I am like my craft, rough and unseemly in the external," said he, with a humble look.

"But thou hast merit of a higher order, it would be unjust not to say, when thou art so un-

pretending. Briefly, here is the tale of this maiden: —Her father was Baron of Lammington, in Lanarkshire; and between him and a clan of Annandale men, called Jardine, a fierce feud raged; the latter stormed the castle of the former, burnt it, and slew her sire and several brothers, together with a number of men. This maid alone, of her family, escaped; and she was so hotly pursued by Birnok, a nephew of the Jardine chief, that—so the story goes, true or false I know not—he overtook her short space from the burning tower. She had a few attendants with her; the Jardine had followed the chase also with but few; so she wheeled her horse round abruptly, calling on her men to do the same. A scuffle ensued; and the result was that the Annandale men were completely routed. It was said that their leader got a severe wound from the dagger of this heroine, in the meleé. A bride of spirit, ha! Sir Arthur?"

"By my faith she is!" replied Heselrig, "an' it be only exerted on such occasions, far be it from me to quarrel with it."

"Well! the Jardines, after they had made an

heiress of her, were determined to reap all the advantage, for this Birnok lay in wait for, and had well nigh forced her off from the castle of a kinsman in the same county, when she took fright, and hid herself in the Cumnock wilds, which it is said she knew of, by hearing her mother speak of them, she being one of those MacRies who owned the place."

"I heard of them while at Cumnock, in the rude rhymes of an old harper there, who hath picked them up in the neighbourhood," said Heselrig.

"Ay, indeed! they are just a race to give theme to minstrels. Some fifty years agone, the lord or chief of that district, who bore the name of MacRie, was guilty of some act of aggression on a neighbouring baron, and refused reparation, because, as he alleged, he was the injured party. This baron applied for aid to the Bailie of the Great Steward, to whom most of the lands in Kyle, of yore, did belong, and both speedily invaded the country of MacRie, to spoil it. And, in consequence of the representations of this Bailie to the Steward, and of the latter to the King, the

lands were forfeited to the Crown, and granted to Cospatrick of March. It is said that, when the latter took possession, he was resisted by the former occupants of the land, and that, on being worsted, they, to a man, left the place, and have disappeared from the district entirely. MacRie fell in a skirmish with Ochiltree, and his son has never been heard of; it is supposed he turned monk.

"A tale that may be told of many lands both here and in England; the law of the strong arm hath prevailed."

"In troth, I fear it hath been so; I think these wild MacRies have been harshly used, for they had only done to their neighbours what the latter had done to them; slaughtered a few beeves, perhaps carried off some, which we of Northumberland know to be but neighbourly practice."

"And this tale, my Lord, hath been told to me because these MacRies were akin to my future lady-love."

"Just so; her mother was daughter of the last MacRie, who ruled Cumnock. But enough of this

—we must to business; and I think what I have said will whet thee to my purpose. In brief, then, thou hast my sanction to win this maiden honourably; but if she be in league with rebels on these hills, the case thou seest will be altered, and she must share the fate of her comrades, so far as lands are concerned."

"Yet the law would be construed mildly in favour of a zealous servant doubtless, my Lord."

"Perchance that may be; but, Sir Arthur, be not reckoning the value of the prize ere thou hast won it,—thou knowest the fable of the bear and his skin. In few words, another attempt must be made to unravel the mystery that hangs over this glen, an' it were for nothing else but to shew my yeomen that the devil hath not a fixed habitation there: Art thou strong enough for another onslaught on it?"

"Strong and ready," cried Heselrig; "although my head simmers yet occasionally, I desire ardently another encounter with that strange and monstrous savage."

"Thou dost not think there is any thing unna-

tural in him, then," said Piercy, musingly; yet men say his size was more than mortal."

"They were all under the influence of the tales they had heard; and, even before this wild man appeared, they were scared out of their senses; superstition did it all, my Lord."

"Yet, if history is to be credited, giants of uncouth form have existed in all ages; wherefore should there not be one in a place so well suited to them? Thy courage, Heselrig, is proof, therefore I speak freely to thee; and if thou canst bring this adventure to a happy issue, whether as it relates to the damsel, outlaws, or giant, who are supposed to inhabit there, thou shalt win my favour permanently, and to thy satisfaction in regard to the succession of your father in Lanark. He is to depart in another week, and some one must succeed; therefore, be expeditious, and consider thou hast much to gain by success."

"In good troth, my Lord," said Heselrig, with a look of perplexity, "I should like to have some fresh men, for the knaves will shudder at the thought of returning to that spot."

"Get volunteers from the garrison, whom thou wilt."

"They are scared alike with those who were present, so well hath the tale been told."

"Stay! this may do—some men are to arrive in two days from Glasgow,—thou mayest contrive to have them off before they have time to be infected by the fears of my people; truth to say, this business is little to our credit, and I would have it kept as quiet as possible till the mystery is solved. A few young knights among them, such as Ridley Featherstone and Foster, have been speaking of trying the adventure, but it hath been declined at my suggestion. We must ensure success to the next attempt. Thou knowest that slaying a giant is the very acmé of chivalrous achievement; for the race have ever been the bane of ladies fair and errant knights. Thou, who art read, knowest all this."

Heselrig, who was more of an infidel on this point, marvelled exceedingly at the style of his Lord's conversation; and, although he himself felt at times the fears of his comrades, they were

easily shaken off. He, therefore, with the suspicion that usually belongs to unprincipled people, believed that his Lord had a covert object in thus encouraging the notion that this giant was a real, and a *bona fide* Ettin, such as are treated of in the old romances."

"And now," said Piercy, interrupting this train of reflection, "the disagreeable affair of the tumult must be thought of. Would to heaven the rogue had been slain outright! I foresee much sedition and trouble in the career of that young rebel;—it is doubted whether he was not busy in sowing the seeds of some plot on this very day; for he was observed to take all the turbulent Scots into a private apartment, in an hostelry, where he held them all long in discourse. Had he not been well allied," continued Piercy, stamping with his foot, "ere this he had fed the ravens!"

"With submission, the man of good family connexion is the best for an example."

"Yea, but not the safest. Slender proof will suffice in the case of a churl; but with a man like this, we must have conclusive evidence, or his

kindred will flock in a body to our King with their supplications, and give much hindrance and obstruction to the course of justice."

"Yet, on this occasion, I think still he may have been fairly despatched; I cannot believe he is alive. His friends would steal the body for the rites of burial alone."

"There is so much of craft about him, that I can scarcely believe he hath not feigned himself dead, and his friends being aware of the deceit, thus carried him off. Were it the case of another man, I would not doubt of his death."

"What are my Lord's commands in the premises?"

"Cause proclamation to be made on three successive days, through this town, that whereas one William Wallace hath been accused of stirring up the lieges to tumult and sedition, a reward shall be given for his apprehension."

"It shall be done forthwith, and I think with much security; for the proof is clear that he was cause and origin of the tumult."

"I have considered it, and I am resolved to cut

him short, for there is much danger in the career he has now entered upon. As for the good Sheriff, we must e'en let him believe that we know not this is the same person with his nephew. I know he cannot control him; and that, for his own sake, he hath kept aloof from his schemes. His son, the stout Captain of Cumnock, hath made further attempts to discover the mystery of the glen, but ineffectually. These outlaws, whoever they may be, have some means of escape which we have not discovered. If this be certain, Heselrig, thou shalt not succeed in the morning. The fog is quite sufficient then to screen them. Make thy next attempt in the afternoon, when thou shalt have the fair light of day to aid thee; and I bethink me, thou must not breathe a word of thy intention, even to those who go with thee, until thou art on the entrance into the valley, for the knave hath spies and agents at work every where, and I fear me he knoweth more about the secrets of that place than is good for his Highness' service." So saying, the Governor nodded his head mysteriously.

"Indeed, my Lord! Nay if he be consorting with thieves and limmers, he is as good as outlaw already."

"I tell thee, Heselrig, as I have said before in secret conference, that he hath been, till yesterday, too crafty to commit himself in any way, so that I may do no more than merely guess at his motives, and suspect his intentions; else, think not, he should have been abroad till now to plague and harass me. By Saint Cuthert! had he been the noblest in the land, as he is but a paltry baron or rather 'squire's second son, he had been crushed in my grasp long ere this, if witness could have been had against him."

"Even those who were put to the question—did they confess nothing to implicate him?"

"Nothing beyond the fact that he conversed with them on the wretched state of their common country; enough to subject serfs and churls to a few torments, but not sufficient to reach the head of a noble gentleman. Thou wouldst not treat them in the same manner, wouldst thou?"—seeing a sort of smile in Heselrig's countenance.

" Nay, far be it from me to question your Lordship's policy; it is wisdom to be cautious where the King is apt to come in as thirdsman, albeit less for the individual than his own interest; yet, that Dame Justice is usually painted blind"—

" Which means, thou knowest, that she is to hoodwink and deceive those with whom she deals; and thus am I her true servitor, for never will the Lord Piercy think the noble and the slave alike, even among the population of Scotland."

CHAPTER XI.

It was a strange and wild retreat
As e'er was trod by outlaw's feet.
* * * *
The grey mist left the mountain side,
The torrent shewed its glistening pride;
Invisible in flecked sky
The lark sent down his revelry;
The blackbird and the speckled thrush
Good-morrow gave from brake and bush.

Lady of the Lake.

SOME weeks after the occurrences just related, we find Wallace seated on a verdant bank, farther up the stream of Afton than that spot which we have described as the scene of Heselrig's discomfiture. He was paler than usual, yet he appeared to have recovered completely from the injuries he received in the tumult at Ayr. Seated by his side was the lovely vision who was still the object of busy and anxious conjecture; not only among the

southron but Scottish inhabitants of the surrounding country. She was sitting under the shade of a tree, and, having thrown off her cap, her hair appeared in natural ringlets spread over a neck of dazzling whiteness. Her face was turned upwards towards Wallace, with an eager expression; her lips slightly apart, as if she was anxiously taking in every word that fell from him, and her cheeks flushed with emotion. It was evident, at first sight of her then, that she was nothing but a creature of this world, and actuated by the feelings of our common nature. He, too, who was gazing on that countenance, thought that a lovelier never belonged to any being, whether celestial or terrestrial.

"But," said she, "thou didst not tell me how thy escape was made from the men who guarded what they believed to be thy lifeless body?"

"That is easily done," replied he. "Cormack had a boat brought close to the river-brink, where they laid me, and so quietly, that it was never heard or suspected by the Southrons;—thither went he with two other friends, while a third, provided with a flask of strong waters, drew the guard

aside for a very short space, during which he and the others stepped out of the boat, and, easily recognising me, had me placed in it immediately, and carried very stealthily across to the New-town, where they set to work to discover if any life remained, and, by the blessing of God and the help of a good chirurgeon, I was speedily restored to myself, though grievously wounded. The first object I was sensible of was Cormack's face, which bore a sort of perplexed expression—hope and surprise being strangely mixed in it. After about an hour it was judged unsafe to remain there, and I was carried, in a litter, on that same night, to the woods of Riccarton, where I have been since, unknown to any but the good chirurgeon, who always at night visited me, and who would scarcely allow me to set out yesterday for this place of refuge; but here I am, well and happy, as I ever must be beside thee, sweet one."

"That Cormack, dearest William, what do I not owe him!"

"Me!" said Wallace, smiling, "me thou owest him; and it was a mercy he was not hurt in

that unlucky bruilzie, or we had both been lost;—he hath ever been more careful of me than himself."

"O these scenes of strife and blood! What a fair world it would be if men would use the faculties God hath given them, and enjoy with the senses he hath in his wisdom bestowed,—look on this fair sky, type of the serenity of mind that should be the portion of man, but for the evil passions that beset him."

"Truly dost thou speak, my Marion, and but for his evil portion man would be little short of angel, yet such is his nature; good and evil are in it blended by Almighty wisdom, and we must suit ourselves to it as best we may. Come! we must not be sad to-day!"

"Sad I am not. How could I be so, seeing this is the first time I have been able to converse with thee alone for months?" replied she. "Thou knowest I am not easily scared or depressed, yet the future must be thought of, and the prospect is not very cheering, even thou wilt allow—my house desolate—the home of my child-

hood a heap of ashes; my parent and my gallant brothers no more, and the wretched hand which shed their blood, seeking to grasp mine in the same reeking gauntlet!—another villain, more powerful, trying every art and wile to entrap me into his power. O William Wallace! had I not some of thy courage, I should sink under such accumulation of misery."

As she uttered these words, her head, in spite of considerable effort to keep herself up, fell on his shoulder, and she gave way for an instant to weeping; but suddenly recovering, she exclaimed, "Such weakness is not for me, nor for the occasion! Thou shalt find me like the betrothed bride of Wallace, and the confident of his high resolves."

"Even so I know thou shalt be! Be of good cheer, too, for I have news that will please thee; fear no more the villanous Jardine."

"What hath befallen him?" enquired she, quickly.

"He hath been slain in one of his midnight raids; of this I have sure intelligence."

"God forgive him, as I do," cried the damsel; "he hath been a guilty man."

"But for this minion of the proud Lord!" cried Wallace, his face darkening. "It is but too true there is nothing too bad for him to undertake—nothing that he doth allow to stand between him and any object he may desire; and what to do with thee, now, I do confess I know not. Thou seest my position. Hitherto this Governor hath been unable to fix any great crime upon me, save the combat at Dundee, which, after all, was not to be made much of, seeing it was a fair fight, and consequently it hath passed over. The broil at Riccarton Bridge, also, and some others, were all too palpably provoked by the Southron; but this last affair, from its magnitude, may readily be made to appear an act of deliberate treason, so many of my friends being engaged in it, as if from previous concert. I believe—I expect that they will proclaim me traitor, and offer a reward for my head."

"Come here, then, William," said she, with a sudden burst of natural feeling, "share with me these beautiful and romantic wilds—the splendid

trees, brilliant flowers, and sparkling waters, unpolluted by the villains of the earth, unknown to the iron heel of oppression."

"And leave my poor fallen country, my wretched countrymen, trodden into the dust by that iron heel, while I am spending my vigorous days in inglorious ease. O, Marion! not even with thee will I enjoy happiness, while thousands who are now looking to me, humble and young as I am, for support and devotion in the hour of trial, are left to perish in the gripe of their enemies. What is it that doth cause your flowers to bloom so—your waters to glitter like gems? what but the glorious liberty which reigns around? Thou hast thyself said it, even now; and if by the exertions of those brave men who are raised to a sense of their degraded and wretched condition, this liberty, instead of being confined to the wilderness, spreads over the width and breadth of the land—ah! what multitudes of beautiful flowers, now trodden in the mire! what myriads of limpid streams, turbid now by the pollution of tyranny, will shine and sparkle for the happiness of man-

kind! Think if liberty can thus beautify the wilds of nature, what will it be in the crowded paths of men, when the timid and crouching shall raise his face to heaven, as he was born to carry it, and speak to his brother man as he hath the right to speak, and the thong and the torture are no more heard of; then shall the face of nature be truly gay, and the veriest weed of creation seem to renovated man the fairest flower!"

"Yes," said she; "it is ever thus that thou dost cheat me into thine own enthusiasm, when, with sparkling eyes, and glowing face, and fervent tongue, thou dost bring before mine eyes, in some shape, the image of glorious liberty. Methinks, after listening to thee, my female nature is cast off, and I feel strong enough to battle at thy side in the cause to which we are both devoted. Verily, when I am alone, or with my relative only, in these wilds, I am as quiet a woman as may be seen; but thy voice is like the war trumpet in mine ear, calling to high deeds and stern determination."

"Thou sayest truly, my Marion; thou art formed alike for high designs and for the quiet

pursuits of woman's life. Had our country been as our last good King left it, free and happy, we might have passed peaceably down the stream: fighting perhaps I might have been occasionally, on some distant strand, the battle of our country; but now, with our most sacred rights invaded, we must either submit quietly, and rear a race of slaves for this Southron tyrant—"

"Never mention it!" cried she, impatiently; "Breathe it not, William Wallace; thou knowest I would sooner die!"

At these words she rose from her seat in the heat of emotion—"Thou dost smile now, I see; thou art laughing at my too easily-excited nature; but if I try sometimes to hide my own ardent disposition, in order to temper thy burning one, thou shouldst not deride me, William; and if I am easily roused by thee, do not forget that others have not the same power over me."

This beautiful and youthful creature was indeed precisely what she represented herself. Born in an age where women of her rank were more rudely nurtured, and their education but little attended to,

she had enjoyed those advantages to an extent uncommon with the daughters of the gentry in her native district; and they had their usual effect in developing the hidden qualities of the mind. The attachment which grew up between her and Wallace, from an early age on her part, gave a bent to them, gradually increasing, until she seemed to be actuated by the same spirit on all occasions. He intrusted her with his schemes and his lofty aspirations for the liberation of his country; and she thought on them, until her excited imagination not only pictured his hopes realized, but represented her glorious hero as the idol of a devoted country. Yet she was also by nature tender and feeling, as well as daring, when called on to shew courage, to an extraordinary degree, at a time when that quality was not so rare among women. Her whole soul might be said to go with Wallace wherever he went; and her body would have been there also, had it been possible to carry on his secret and dangerous proceedings with safety to her, under any disguise, in his company.

They sat there, under a clear summer sky, the

brook murmuring at their feet, on a carpet of green sward flowered with daisies; in front of them a deep dell, with almost perpendicular hills on each side, the entrance to which was so hidden by trees, that its existence could only be known by the tributary stream which ran from it into the Afton by which they sat; and, looking along it, one could descry here and there a glimpse of some projecting crag, thrusting its grey head among the lofty trees, as if to maintain its right to a place there.

The Afton, at this spot a small stream, with the same lofty hills on each side, turned off sharply at a little distance on their left; and on the right the same brook came down from the southern moorland through a series of smaller hills, almost denuded of trees, on which, barren and rocky as they were, the eye rested with pleasure, after viewing in every other direction a wilderness of primeval oaks, Scots firs, and other monarchs of the wood. They were not far from the source of the little river, and in the centre of a country as wild and as remote from the settled habitations of

men as it was possible to find in Ayrshire; and there was no cot nor hut in view which might be conjectured to hold a human being at any time.

The couple sat there for a considerable space, undisturbed by any sound save the rippling of the brook, and the songs of birds, whilst he revealed all his proceedings since they last met, and the plans he had formed for the future. They were roused at last by the sound of small bells; and looking up, they beheld a hawk hovering over them.

"That is his falcon; he must be at hand," cried she, rising.

The bird kept its position, high in the air; and Wallace took off his bonnet, and threw it up as a lure, crying like a falconer the while; it made a stoop, but raked off just over them, turning its head on one side to view them attentively.

"She fears you," said Marion; and, standing upright, she extended an arm, calling in her clear silvery voice, "Ho! Jessie," when the hawk immediately stooped, hovered an instant within a yard of them, then dropped and settled quietly on her wrist.

"She is his favourite," said she, caressing the noble bird, which was smoothing its plumage with a feeling of perfect security. "And where hast thou ranged to-day, Jessie? I fear me thou hast misbehaved, for I see no one; thou hast missed thy quarry, surely, my brave bird, and that is what thou dost right rarely."

Soon afterwards, a man appeared approaching from the open space on the right, accompanied by a few wild-looking figures, his attendants in the chase. Wallace rose to meet him; he was dressed nearly as we have once before met him, in his character of Minstrel of the Glen; but his followers wore garments whose material seemed to be taken chiefly from the skins of wild beasts, and they were rude and unshorn in their aspect.

"How fares my gentle kinsman?" enquired he; "hath the night's rest refreshed thee as it ought?"

"Right well am I, kind father; thanks to thy care. What success in thy sport this morning?"

"But little. We are too many, I doubt me, now; but thou wilt not think so, Wallace; the deer grow scarce as men increase in number."

Wallace, as a lover of the chase, did not fail to caress the hounds, of various sorts, which were in the train of these wild huntsmen, and much was said about different kinds of hunting; for on such occasions the discourse generally takes that turn, when the Minstrel abruptly left them and went on before with his men and dogs. Wallace cast an enquiring look at Marion.

"He is well," she said, in reply to it; "I know by his look he is better than he was yester even; but beware how thou dost raise such a tumult in his mind again. Alack! my poor uncle! full often doth the truth come in my mind, William, that no misfortune is without an end—at least, without an attending benefit to some one; without me he would surely have been lost and forlorn in these evil days."

The Minstrel walked across the brook in silence, and, entering the dell on the other side, disappeared instantly among the thick underwood and densely growing trees at its mouth. The rest followed, keeping the very centre of the streamlet, which was so shallow as to cause little inconve-

nience, in order that no trace might be left behind of their footsteps. This was considered so essential by the outlaws, for so they were, that a man was appointed specially to inspect and obliterate all marks of any description which would lead strangers to suspect a human habitation to be near; and this duty was discharged by him every morning, after any of them had departed, and continued throughout the day, as might be necessary. The path, if it might be so called, went for about a hundred paces (while there was still some soil on the banks to support the growth of trees) through a thick brushwood of hazel, willow, and birch, the boughs of which intermingled across the little brook, and obstructed the traveller so much, that he was obliged to use his hands to clear a passage. After proceeding as far as this underwood reached, the channel became narrower, and consisted entirely of solid rock, about a foot of this, on one side, being considerably raised above the level of the rest, so that it was dry, except when the burn was in flood. The cliffs here rose perpendicularly to the height of fifty feet on each side, exhibiting

nothing to the traveller but a wall-like aspect of uncommon altitude, which, the channel being so narrow, almost entirely excluded the light of day. Proceeding onwards through this pass for about twenty paces more, an opening appeared on the left, affording passage to a tiny streamlet which ran into the other and larger one,—rude and rough fragments of rock, evidently scattered by nature, yet fit for the footing of man, here formed a path up this narrow chasm for a few feet, until, proceeding upwards, the passenger found himself on a winding path, almost like a turnpike stair, which took him to the summit of the cliff.

The Minstrel and the rest of the party then proceeded along a very indistinct footpath, like a hare track, winding through the wood for a short distance, when all at once they came upon a long low range of turf cottages covered with ivy (which grew luxuriantly round about on the rocks and decaying trees), and so concealed and shaded by the deep green firs, that, until almost touching them, a stranger would not perceive what they were, so like was their appearance to a ridge of ivy-covered

rocky ground. Farther on, a conical hill, which raised its peaky summit above the tops of the trees that grew near its base, presented itself. Like the rest of the mountains, its upper half had no verdure; its base, however, was green with the same mantle of woodbine. The party entered within (it seemed) the interior of this rocky eminence, but presently the stranger would discover that they were in a rustic bower, similar in construction to the rest but larger, and having several apartments, the whole curiously built of wood like the others, and fitted to the rock so as to resemble, by means of the ivy, a part of it. The doors of all these strange edifices were covered by the same green mantling, and light was admitted through numerous apertures in the structure, screened from observation by the same means.

Near this spot, a crystal fountain bubbled from the ground, and meandered down to the Afton, which it entered near the place called Amrigh, which was distant only a couple of hundred paces. East of this was a considerable space, which the outlaws had cleared of wood with great labour, and

converted into a beautiful green, it being a sort of level platform, surrounded by the same wild scenery of hills, with a rocky base and summit, and thickly wooded sides. The outlaws had so chosen and fashioned the locality that no enemy could come upon them unobserved, because there were points for sentinels which commanded views of every quarter by which they could be approached; and they had hitherto escaped, sometimes narrowly, by keeping within their houses and restraining their well-trained dogs from emitting any sound whatever, while strangers were in the neighbourhood, which could only be when parties were detached in search of runaway serfs, or, latterly, of themselves; for they were aware that the Governor must, by some means or other, have discovered the existence of men in a quarter considered previously to be uninhabited. And, although hunters sometimes approached within a mile or two of the locality, they never cared to enter into fastnesses that appeared to them almost impenetrable.

Such was the wild retreat chosen by the last of an ancient race of Celtic Chiefs, whose misfortunes

had been partly related by Lord Piercy to his confidant. His father had a dispute which ended in an open rupture with the Norman family of Colville, lately become lords of the adjoining barony of Ochiltree. Mutual depredations took place as usual; and Cumnock, being better supported by his followers on one occasion, fairly routed Ochiltree on his own ground, taking some prisoners and a drove of cattle, after the fashion of the times. The defeated party, having more influence in high quarters than the other, related the matter in his own way to the representative of the powerful Stewarts, Lords of Kyle, who amply avenged him, as has been told. But the wise king, Alexander, instead of granting the forfeited lands to the complainant, introduced one into the quarter who would be likely to keep down all the turbulent chiefs of the neighbourhood, which was rather remarkable for its feuds; and thus Cospatrick became Lord of Cumnock. The hatred of the MacRies, which had always been great, increased to an intense degree against the strangers, who were thus thrusting forth the last of the old inhabitants

of the district from their hereditary possessions. But they were powerless; for their followers of the inferior class being considered as serfs, were consigned along with the land to the new lord — a measure which aggravated the fury of their chief to such a pitch, that he mustered what power he could, which was but small, and fell in a desperate attack on Ochiltree Castle.

His son, the last of the family, removed to Elderslie, Sir Malcolm being his father's cousin-german; and as he was a mere youth, he was placed in the Abbey of Kilwinning, in order that he might be trained for the church, provided he could be reconciled to that mode of life, which he (Malcolm) doubted: but as some odium rested on the name, from the displeasure of the king, the good knight deemed it the best thing for him. The young man, to the surprise of the monks, took to his learning with assiduity, and advanced rapidly in the acquisition of knowledge. But, after a couple of years, instead of taking to a monastic life, he began to complain of the irksomeness of that way of living, and was frequently at Elderslie,

where at last he settled, under the designation of Father Angus, distinguished for his eccentricity and his learning. Sir Malcolm perceived that at times his brain was unsettled ; and, in some broils that had occurred, in which he took arms along with the rest of the family, it was observed that, in the heat of the melee, he was just as ready to offer his weapon against a Saxon follower of Sir Malcolm, as one of the enemy.

Under such circumstances his warlike propensities were discouraged, and he became indifferent to all things, apparently, but what books he could get possession of, till the children of his kinsman were ready for tuition, when he undertook the task of teaching them. He became much attached to his pupils, William especially, and he took great pains to instil into him his own opinions regarding the progress of events, consequent on the death of the King, and the artful intervention of the English Sovereign in the affairs of the country, diverging from this, to the calamities brought upon Scotland, since the days of Canmore, by the entrance of Southrons, and then would he curse

the memory of King David in the bitterness of his heart.

In fact, he had before sorely outraged the feelings of the monks, by launching an anathema at this their favourite saint, while at Kilwinning.

"Saint!" cried the furious youth — "a saint! because he spoiled others to enrich the church, and because, in doing so, he brought in Southron strangers to occupy the land of better men — Fie on such sanctity! The lands granted by him were not his own; and the priests, forsooth, must have Saxons (to till their ground) in place of the free foresters who were already there, and who would not bend their necks to the work of slaves."

It was thus the seeds were sown which took deep root in Wallace's mind, and grew under the fostering effect of personal observation. The peculiarity in Angus' habits and disposition became more evident as he advanced in years; and, at last, he wandered away, sometimes no one knew where, for weeks together, and finally disappeared entirely from Elderslie. He had been drawn by instinctive feeling to the place of his birth, had made himself

known to the few followers of his family who remained, the rest having either sought the Highlands or the kindred population of Galloway; — and, having taken upon himself the character of a wandering harper, was understood by the Saxon followers of Dunbar to have all the permanent residence he possessed in one of the cottages that stood in the gorge of Afton glen, where he had been known to remain for a couple of days at a time. But he had gathered the remnant of his people in the hills, and sought that independence there which the society of mankind denied him and them. Wallace discovered this in the prosecution of his own schemes, and they soon entered into a perfect understanding regarding the ulterior proceedings of both.

But he had discovered also, that the excitement arising out of Angus's deep interest in the subject, was increased to an alarming degree, when they discussed the operations he was engaged in, and he almost feared, if it was possible for him, to enter on it with him. His mental malady was of that description now known as monomania; and apart

from it, this wild man of the hills might be reckoned an accomplished individual, and one well acquainted with the courtesies of life, as then recognised and practised. It was necessary, however, at this important crisis in his affairs, that Wallace should hold a long, free, and confidential conversation with him; and they were engaged in it within a short space after entering the bower. Wallace narrated to him particularly what had occurred in Ayr, which he had not been able to do on the day before, and then proceeded—

"The time, you see, has arrived, my honoured master (so he often called him) when I must be ever under the green-wood tree, until Scotland is freed from thraldom, or my poor carcase beneath the sod; hear then distinctly and fully what, in my poor mind, should be done. Thou knowest that in many places I have assurances of support,—far distant from this. In our own sheriffdom my secret supporters comprehend every name of note. There is not a Scot here who burns not to escape from the iron grasp of Edward; unhappily there are few, also, who are willing to stake land and

lordship for the prize of freedom, against the might of the usurper; but if a bold stroke could be struck, —if it could be shewn to them that there are stout hearts ready to embark every thing in the cause;—if, in short, the stone is set a rolling in the midst of people, goaded as they are by oppression, and anxious to escape from it, I am sure that it will increase in force and impetus, until it makes an impression, and until every man, from the southron border to far Caithness, puts his hand to it. The Scottish people are now like the noble steed, mastered and borne down in spirit and body by a load too heavy for nature to support. Let them see and feel, like the steed, when his burthen is partly cast off, that they may be free, and they will kindle in spirit, and increase in strength till they are so."

Angus sat with his head on his breast, as if he wished the expression of his countenance to escape observation.

"Go on," said he.

"I have," continued Wallace, "communed with good Auchinleck, our kinsman, and others equally

trusty; and they think this counsel which I propounded to them, though bold and riskful to me, such as the times justify, and such as must be adopted, sooner or later, ere any good may be effected. I propose, that as many as we can make be collected for an open attempt on those wains of supplies, which are passing frequently from Ayr to Lanark well guarded. A defeat and a seizure of a party like this would kindle hope in the breasts of all. And my bright sword to a maiden's needle, would increase my strength at once!"

"It will do! it will do!" shouted Angus, starting up and grasping his head firmly and wildly with his hands.

Wallace gazed anxiously on him without speaking. He paced the apartment, where they were quite alone, for a few seconds, and by a violent effort seemed to master his feelings.

"William! my boy! my own son! thou little knowest how vehemently I have prayed for a moment like this; but, fear me not, I can master myself on occasion of such mighty import."

He spoke with deep emotion, and as if his words came with difficulty.

"I have refrained from urging any such step for thy sake; and lest my impetuosity, and that infirmity of which I am fully aware, should hurry thee, and another as dear to me, into perdition; but since men held wary and sage deem it to be wise, I must hail it as the first dawn of freedom in my unhappy land."

Saying this, he sat down, and tears flowed freely over his cheeks, as he made a sign to Wallace to proceed.

"It is nearly all said, saving that many good friends among the barons of Kyle have promised to supply, still secretly, such men as they can, without risk to themselves, and under disguised arms and pennons. My trusty Cormack is even now on the scout for information; on his return we shall learn what chance there be of speedy and open meleé with these tyrants. Send it soon, kind heaven!"

"Amen!" shouted, rather than said, the overmastered Angus, who again rose and paced the

apartment, while Wallace proceeded to pour out his information from different quarters, and his remarks on it; and, after a considerable space had elapsed, the former resumed his seat composedly, but bearing on his features the marks of deep thought and powerfully excited feelings.

"Thou hast said that Piercy hath become aware of thy practices; is it lately thou hast made the discovery?"

"I had been told some time ago—but I could never ascertain the fact, for the parties were removed voluntarily or otherwise from their abodes, —that his spies had tampered with some whom I trusted, and that by means of the thumbscrew, and even of the rack, he had enforced a confession; but it was little they could confess, enough only to justify, according to Southron opinion, severity toward them—nothing against me; but very lately, a yeoman, who had given offence to the Seneschal's officer, and had been seen in conference with me, was visited by a party and carried before the Seneschal himself, who put him in a dungeon, under threat of torture if he did not reveal all that had

passed between us, which indeed was little, only a brief conversation on a market-day, when I took occasion to hint at the intolerable wrongs we all endured from these Southrons, and the remedy; and he, being a stout churl, denied in bold and straightforward fashion, that there was any thing else than a little grumbling; so, after trying the thumbikins, they let him go, with a caution against any more dealings with me; but, smarting in the thumbs, and nowise intimidated, he found me out very soon, and gave me friendly counsel regarding the people I spoke to, assuring me, from good evidence, that others had been brought to confess much more!"

"I need scarcely tell thee, William, that this Piercy is a man of no common stamp; thou hast heard me say so before. He hath in him a strange mixture of good and evil, of blind confidence and unjust suspicion, of harsh disregard of human suffering and of chivalrous devotion to the interests of humanity, according as they appear to him in different forms; of great talents and knowledge of men all allow he is, besides a soldier of renown, and a leader who ranks with the foremost of his

land. Such is he with whom thou, a youth of no rank, art about to enter the lists in a contest for liberty."

"It is with the tyrant, in very deed, that we are to engage," replied Wallace, while his cheek reflected the angry flush that dwelt on the other's. "The men of England, like those of Scotland, are chained to the triumphant genius of their land-monopolizing King!—If Piercy served a prince of more chivalrous disposition, and less driven by the vile thirst of gain, for no nobler purpose than that of increasing the width of his dominion, a prince who could look on men humbler than himself as men, and not as machines to obey the impulse he gives them, and to be crushed if they do not, Piercy would be a nobler man."

"Thou speakest truth, my son," replied Angus, becoming more calm as the conversation diverged from the immediately exciting subject, "and in this is shewn the omnipotent power of mind, which breaks and bends to its will those whose mental powers are of a feebler order, even as the stronger wolf can crush the feebler fox; even as one body

has mastery over another, so hath one mind over another."

"Yes, father, that is not to be doubted," said Wallace, "yet it doth seem to me that this Edward of England, great as he is in mind, is still more indebted to the opposite quality, in an ancestor who brought forward to aid his crown the bodily strength of thousands who might otherwise have been opposed to him. Thou has taught me history so well, that I were dull indeed not to draw the proper moral from it. When the English barons enfranchised the majority of their villeins, to array them against the power of John, that they might wring from him the Grand Charter of their liberties, they called into existence a physical power which the great mind of Edward hath swayed, to the extension of his own influence and the consequent coercion of his barons, into whatever views he may entertain, whether of conquest abroad or despotic rule at home."

"Thus a wise Providence doth work out its own purposes, and we, blind mortals, can only marvel while the great act is in progress, and admire when

it is accomplished. Even in the present prostration of Scotland may lurk the germ of future prosperity, and liberty spring brighter and more beautiful than e'er she shone before, even in the days of her ancient glory, from her misery and degradation; but that will be, if it ever is, for the mingled blood of Saxon and Briton, for the name and the renown of the latter hath departed for ever; and accursed be the cause—the bastard and his robber-band, and the feeble hands of the Saxons, who could not defend the land they had reft by their numbers from a nobler people! Accursed be Norman and Saxon alike! And that Celtic King who first took to his arms a Saxon wife, and began the invasion of our fair land by these greedy strangers, accursed be also his memory!"

"Hush! O hush! my father," said Wallace, soothingly; "remember that we both share the blood of the stranger. Through my veins circulates the crimson tide derived from three Saxon ancestresses, and from one of those is drawn part of thine own; if not for the sake of that—if not for my sake—yet, in consideration of the British

race that exists commingled with the Saxon, be thou like me, and turn thy rage on the false and cruel southron King and his bloody, devoted tools. It is not the first time we have talked in this manner; it is not for the first time that I, of thine own dearly loved race, have implored thee to spare, in thy speech and thy deeds, the remnant of it which exists over the breadth of the land, as in me, mixed with that of the stranger. And look round thee, father; in Galloway, in the isles and the far north, still exist many thousands who, with thee, reverence the memory of their British forefathers —wouldst thou curse and crush them also?"

"I know that I am wild and visionary, and that vain imaginings will agitate me," said Angus sadly. "I know also that the ancient people of the land are lost for ever as a people; yet one who hath suffered from the change, the last of a lordly line among them, may be pardoned for speaking bitterly of their oppressors; thou shouldst bear with me, William Wallace."

In fact, he felt the power of one mind over another to be exemplified in himself; he felt that

Wallace could control him in his wildest moods, simply by making his tone and his look more impressive, and he on this occasion had done so, feeling the necessity for keeping him in check during the important conference; and the other, like one yielding to greater force against his will, submitted with a sort of grumbling. The power of a stronger over a weaker intelligence was thus strikingly made manifest; yet, as may be seen from the anxiety with which Wallace sought this discussion with him, that he looked on the excitable solitary as one whose opinions were of great consequence; and, in fact, he had been heard often to declare that, in his cool and rational moments, Father Angus was the wisest and most intelligent of all his counsellors.

"Who can tell," continued Wallace, "what the inscrutable will of the Almighty may be? Light and shadow alternate in this world—a nation is in slavery to-day, and made free by one glorious battlefield on the morrow. In the princely nobles of our land the mingled current runs of which I spoke; and the day may yet come when a king of Scot-

land's royal race maternally sprung, may sway her destinies, and hurl defiance in the teeth of our southern foes!"

"It may, William Wallace; but that blood doth only gild as yet the pomp of our tyrant. The Bruce, the Comyn, like the puppet Baliol, swell the train of his willing worshippers. No! thou hast reasoned justly when thou didst begin with the multitude; carry it with thee like a strong torrent, and these great ones must go along with, or be overwhelmed in it."

"Yea," said Wallace, pleased to see that this idea had taken hold of Angus; "but what else could the noble Carrick do? Guarded and watched by Edward's jealous vigilance, knowing, by what hath already chanced, that his lordships in both countries would be seized, to grant to others less scrupulous, in order that Edward's power might be increased to do evil here! The vassals of Bruce and Comyn are likely to be less inimical to Scotland than if they were under the rule of a noble, who is filled with prejudice, it may be, against us, and who hath all to gain and nought to lose by

obeying the orders of his sovereign. They bide their time; and when they see the lowest of their countrymen scattering the Southron, and effecting, by their own unaided strength and valour, the liberation of their country, then will they see their time is come."

"I doubt me," said Angus, shaking his head; "if they weigh the matter thus nicely. I doubt if they consider that their own lands and vassals, conveyed to others, would be more hurtful to the country, so much as that it would prejudice themselves if the cause were ruined. However that be, there is truth and reason in what thou sayest; to peril the wealth and the blood of Scotland, on one rash and hasty rising, would be injudicious. Our deliverance must be wrought gradually at first, and the risk incurred only by those who have life and no more to lose; their success will be warrandice to hazard the lands and the wealth of all classes in the attempt. But this manner of working out our freedom would be hopeless without one like thee, possessing all the fire, and more than the energy of youth, and far more than the wisdom of

mature years, as these qualities are found in ordinary men. How often have I blessed God for thee, my son! and grateful have I been that, amidst all my woes, this boon was vouchsafed, and the training of thy master-mind intrusted to me."

"O cease, good master! thy love for me doth lead thee into error."

"Nay, William Wallace, the time hath passed when praise can injure thee; thy mind is a rock on which the fate of nations may safely rest; and the rock contains a mine, a storehouse of high precepts and matured thought, wonderful in one so young. It is borne in upon me, my son, that thou art raised up by Divine Providence for the regeneration of this wretched land."

"And men say," replied Wallace, with a smile, "that this notion hath taken too deep a hold on thine own mind, my master."

"Who can say so,—who can know it?" asked he hastily, "even our own kindred—who else? None in these parts, but thine own people, and not all of them, know who thou art."

"I believe they do not; none can guess that in

the poor wandering Harper they saw the gay youth who, in happier times, was foremost in the game, the chase, or the battle-field; but, alas! few indeed remain who saw me in those halcyon days. And they say, doubtless, that the crazed brain of Father Angus hath tainted thine with his wild imaginings. It is little they can tell that will move me; but if I have been the humble instrument of turning thy mind to this high and holy purpose, I shall glory in the ruin of my family, because it hath been the salvation of my country."

"Pure and high thy thoughts have always been, my father; and, save a little passing irritation against these strange settlers, no man hath heard aught from thee, or seen aught in thee, that did not breathe the most devoted, the purest patriotism, —patriotism untarnished by a single thought of thyself. Thou art even too high and noble for this world of selfish strife, my father. If thou didst see less of the latter among these strangers, thou wouldst soon cleave to them also; but they vex, harass, and annoy thee, as much by their want of thy lofty principles, as by their possession

of the country. Thou seest I know thee well, good father!"

Angus mused a little at this uncommon strain of his old pupil's discourse, and then said—

"No, Wallace, it is not so; I would peril aught that remains to me of my former self; I might even, as I said, think the ruin of my race fortunate to rescue this land from thraldom; but it is because a remnant remains of the Scottish nation, which the proud Roman respected, that I would do so; because in rescuing it, mingled as it is in blood and lineage, with the invaders, scaith and scorn would be the portion of the latter who have no lasting footing among us."

"Even so,—do I not say so?—thou wouldst save the Scottish nation as it hath been since the days of Malcolm, and thou wouldst have destruction on the followers of our Usurper?"

Angus again mused, but briefly, and spoke abruptly.

"This is idle prating, William;—let us have no more of it; but believe this, that thou knowest not yet my real feelings."

"Dost thou *know* them, good father?—didst thou know them when the Saxon woman lost her child in the river, and, although thou dost detest her race, thou didst plunge in, risking thy own life, to save that of an enemy's child?"

"Pshaw! who seeing such accident would pause to ask what race the infant was of?—that is nothing—no argument."

"Ay! but is, is my father, a strong one in my favour,—were the Saxons pure as this infant, as unstained by vice as it and thou art, thou wouldst not destroy them. What then remains but this, that not the people, but their evil practices—not the blood they own, but the vices that beset them, are the cause of thy mortal hatred?"

"Thou art foolish, boy," cried he, in an excited tone; "plague me no more in this fashion."

Wallace saw there was danger of the fit returning, and quietly turned to another subject.

"I told thee of this new favourite of The Piercy—this Heselrig, I think. Men say he hath great power over his Lord, which he doth abuse for his own behests, that are of the worst description."

"Thou didst say so before;—any new crime hath he committed?"

"His life," said Wallace, a frown gathering on his face, "doth seem a series of crimes. Lust is the demon that rules him; marvellous it is that one so wise as Piercy, so vigilant and watchful, cannot perceive the evil effect of his follower's conduct on his government."

"Subtle and cunning, blind obedience to his will, and a little flattery to overweening pride, will go far to make Piercy blind to faults in a sagacious and bold retainer, in whose judgment he hath confidence."

"Thou hast studied deeply the character of this Governor."

"Truly have I, my son. Much in the coming struggle will depend on the Governor of the West; and it hath been my task to acquire every information regarding him. The result is such as I have told thee, and which may be thus summed up: Piercy, to his fellows, is a high and chivalrous noble; to those under his governance, just what the Usurper shall dictate."

"Just so; loyalty to his liege is one devoir of a foreign son of chivalry—disregard of the ignoble doth seem to be another; for, in this fanciful code of honour, which doth addle the brains of all who are so descended, I cannot discover that the other classes are to be at all considered. Plebeians are as nothing in the eyes of your preux chevalier—fit only to run beside the horse of their lord in battle, and cover him with their shields, while they are naked and he cased in iron."

"Ay; and if the poor slave faileth in this, his own life is the forfeit. Desertion of the lord in danger is, with these Normans, a capital crime, although it might be to avoid inevitable death."

"The proud Piercy doth think few his equal. Heselrig, his vassal, doth sneer at him in private, but is in continual fear of him. Nothing but this dread of his superior prevents him from breaking out into every excess openly; his ingenuity in blinding his Lord is truly wonderful; for, notwithstanding what thou sayest, Piercy hath many instruments at work. Sometimes I think that it is hardly possible for him to be ignorant of any

thing that may occur; but then the skill of the other, in gaining over spies to his own interest, is equal to his craft and deep devices; and thus a game is continually going on between them—of masterly attempts at gaining secret intelligence, and ingenious plans to foil them."

Here Cormack entered, as if in haste, and just from a journey.

"In good time; here is my trusty Cormack," cried Wallace. "What news?"

"Thou art proclaimed traitor to Edward, as if that were possible," said Cormack, indignantly, "and a price put on thy head!"

"Well! I expected so much. What else?"

"The next piece of news will suit better the mood thou art in now, I perceive; and I can guess why thou art desirous of gaining such intelligence, since thou art prepared for outlawry. Six days hence a rich convoy of provisions, just landed at Ayr, will proceed to Lanark, under the charge of one whose name I dislike to mention—Fenwick."

"Fenwick! Fenwick! gracious heaven! I thank thee! The murderer of my father! Liberty and

vengeance are both in the very sound of thy intelligence. Speak yet again, trusty Cormack. What force shall he have, this miscreant?"

"A strong one, my master, for the charge is valuable. It was said at the Castle, fifty men at arms, and four hundred yeomen, halberdiers, and archers."

"They shall be met! they shall be met! and by freemen fighting for their homes, their wives, their children, redeemed from slavery! Shall Fenwick stand against us? Not for a moment."

The whole quiet demeanour of Wallace was changed by this news, and his frame assumed that animated and vigorous aspect, which made the very souls of his enemies quail before him in battle.

"Hear'st thou, my father! heard'st thou the glorious truth? The bird thou did'st speak of, that phœnix, hath already opened her wings, and a few days more will see her in full flight, before the admiring gaze of all Scotland."

"May the God of Armies render the day auspicious!" exclaimed Angus, solemnly. "It is an awful, an eventful time, my son."

"It is so, my father, but we have anticpated it; we have expected to hear of the day when the first blow shall be struck for freedom, openly and in the face of the glorious sun. And, having learnt it, I am on fire till it arrives."

"But thou must be calmer, my son; this excitement is not like thyself."

"True; but consider all the purport and nature of Cormack's tidings, and wonder not! I am ready, however, calm in a moment, to discuss with thee the measures to be adopted; the men?"

"We have only about fifty here; thou knowest it was impossible to keep more in one quarter; between this and Loch Doon on one side, and Carntable on the other, we shall muster three hundred men of the greenwood, living on the forest deer."

"They are hardy men, but badly armed; thy own following of fifty, thou must keep, for thyself and Marion will need such protection; the rest we shall get, and a choice band armed and ready from our friendly barons. This night I must see Reginald Crawford."

"Thou hast not yet taken him into thy counsels?"

"No, I judged it best to say nothing to him, for many reasons, still. Cormack, refresh thyself, my friend; thou dost want rest also; I shall not keep thee now."

Cormack was met, as he retired from the door of the apartment, by Marion.

"Good Cormack," said she, "I would thank thee for the great care thou hast taken of thy lord. Indeed, I am grateful to Providence for sending a faithful friend like thee. I am grateful also to a kind maiden at Loudon, who tended thee and saved thy life when thou wert wounded in Wallace's quarrel. She is, I hear, truly a good and a kind maiden; and for her attention to thee, I would give her some token of my esteem. Thou seest here a paltry ornament, worth nothing save as a mark of regard; take it, my friend, and when in thy wanderings thou dost again meet with Alice of Hiltown, give it to her from me."

Cormack felt the full force of her delicate manner of acknowledging his services to Wallace,

and avowing her interest in Alice at the same time.

"My thanks, Lady," said he, "are ever due both to my lord and you. Nothing that my poor life could purchase can equal his bountiful kindness to me. The maiden of Hiltown shall receive the gift of my lady; and sure I am she will value it more than aught which wealth can buy."

"Now haste thee to thy refreshment and rest," said the Lady, seeing the embarrassment he was in; and they parted. There was so much of primitive simplicity about Marion, that she never dreamt of concealing from their followers the relation in which she stood to Wallace as his future bride.

Sundry of the wild adherents of Angus gathered with much familiarity around Cormack. They were all clothed in a costume resembling that of their ancestors in remote times, the principal part of their dress being a tunic of skin tanned with the hair on—the latter outside, and fastened by a belt of the same material; under it they had loose breeches reaching to the knee, and open there, the legs being bare. On

their feet they had brogues of leather thus rudely tanned, and with the hair also on the outside. The breeches were in some cases also of the skins of animals, and in others they were of coarse woollen plaiding. This rude apparel was partly the choice of their Chief, and partly the result of necessity. They were anxious to learn as much of Cormack's intelligence as he could prudently communicate; for they seemed to be fully aware of the important and highly perilous nature of his occupation. On this occasion he had taken a very bold step, but after mature consideration, and his success shewed the clearness of his perception and the dauntless coolness of his nature. Judging from what he had gathered on other journies to Ayr, that he would prove a source of amusement to the garrison, if he appeared in the Castle under the same garb and aspect which astonished Watt and his men on Riccarton bridge, he let his hair fall over his eyes, after having donned his serf's clothing, and the simple wandering look conforming to both, and thus presented himself as an ignorant and wild rustic, gazing to satisfy his curiosity. It was not

long ere he was surrounded by a number of the Southrons; and as he acted his part to admiration, even Watt of Badley forgot his resentment, and claimed the merit of first discovering the salvage-man, who served better than even a wandering Harper to amuse them.

After they got a little accustomed to him, he was less annoyed by their jokes; and being regarded as a poor silly creature, was allowed to go every where about the Castle, and to listen to any conversation that was carried on there. Thus, with eyes and ears open to every thing, and by the help of an answer to a question put in the most indifferent and simple manner by him, when he found it necessary, he made himself master of all that was projected, and even of the private thoughts and opinions of the leading men in Piercy's household. The greatest hardship he suffered, while on this duty, was the abuse which he frequently heard lavished on Wallace, whose prowess in the late skirmish in the town had, coupled with the reports previously circulated regarding him, made a deep impression on all; and some of them even suggest-

ed to Cormack that he should endeavour to apprehend him, or assist them to do so, the reward being high; and he could only shake his head in reply, as if afraid.

Angus and Wallace were long engaged in arranging the proceedings in which they were both to be involved, against the party under Fenwick, and which was, in fact, to be the first open declaration of their sentiments against the English usurpation, for which Wallace had been some time preparing. Angus was desirous of joining himself to Wallace in the undertaking, but the unprotected state of Marion deterred him. "When thou hast succeeded so far as to conquer some sufficient strength, there shall we place her, and then shall I take to the open field also against the Southron." In fact, since the invasion of his territory by Heselrig he had scarcely left the place, as he used to do, in the character of Minstrel occasionally during the day.

Wallace was by no means desirous of having him along with him; for although a redoubted warrior, his unsettled and unstable mind rendered

him wild and rash in the extreme, during the heat of battle; and he feared that, in the dangerous game he was about to play, such an auxiliary might soon fall a victim to the enemy. He was rejoiced, therefore, when a hint he threw out about Marion, operated instantly and so effectually as to fix his resolution to remain where he was. The men whom he represented as occupying the wilder parts of the forest around him were of all descriptions, but chiefly serfs who had deserted from the service of their new lords, and who burned with desire to avenge the injuries they had received. Many of them were of Saxon origin, but those living with Angus were all of the ancient race of inhabitants, and most of them originally of the district over which his family had held sway. On them he had perfect dependence, and he had contrived to provide them sufficiently in both defensive and offensive armour.

CHAPTER XII.

Ah! wretched world, the den of wickedness—
Deformed by sin and foul iniquity.

* * * *

He wond'red much at his so selcouthe case,
And by his persone's secret seemlyhied,
Well weened that he had been some man of place,
Before Misfortune did his hue deface.

Faery Queene.

THE next day, messengers having been despatched to different parts of the forest early in the morning, to warn the outlaws to attend that afternoon on their Chief, Wallace departed with a few select followers, to choose the ground whereon to meet Fenwick, and (still in disguise) to visit the friendly barons who had secretly promised support. As he had only five days to prepare every thing, the task to any other would have been extremely arduous; but he went forth joyously, as one who had attained what he had long ardently desired, and

his native vigour seemed increased, and his mental energies excited to extraordinary exertion, by the nature of the work he was engaged in. The only anxiety he felt was on account of his bethrothed. She had parted from him, full of that enthusiastic ardour which he had been mainly instrumental in raising within her; and, being naturally courageous, she had no misgiving as to the event; but he could not look on her position without uneasiness—in the guardianship of one whose noble nature was shrouded too often in the mist of partial insanity, at a time, when a shrewd man like the Governor, whose knowledge was so extensive, must guess at the connection which existed between him and the outlaws of those hills, and who, at this period, would be most likely to make further attempts on them.

Yet he relied much on the superstitious dread which prevailed regarding the inhabitants of that quarter, and also on the prowess of Angus and his bands. Even if she had been willing to leave her uncle, Wallace had no place of safety for her. In any friendly house she would be exposed to the

sight of Piercy's friends; and he (he was aware) deemed her a prize for some one of his followers.

Being well acquainted with the ground between Ayr and Lanark, he had already, in his own mind, marked out his first battle field; and he went directly across the country to it. It was in the neighbourhood of Loudonhill, near a place called Allanton, and like almost the whole district, covered with wood. After surveying it minutely, he went off alone in the garb of a peasant and on foot, to apprize his friends of the coming event, leaving his men to occupy the recesses of the forest until his return; and here we must leave him to relate what occurred in Afton after his departure.

On the second day thereafter, and when Angus had dispatched all those he had summoned together from a distance to join the few Wallace left near Loudonhill, Marion proposed to him to go forth to a particular spot in the forest, nearly a mile distant, where, she said, Duncan had told her he had seen lately many roe deer and also some capercailzie—" I am even tired," said she, " dear uncle,

of lingering in one place till we hear from Wallace."

"Why shouldst thou?" replied he. "Thou art not wont to sit down when the chase doth promise well. Come, come! do not let fear overcome thee."

"Nay, call it not fear; when I think of his prowess I have no fears; but still there is a something—it may be, uncle, the woman, after all, claiming her portion in me."

Angus smiled. "Nay, though thou hast a spirit in thee, thou art a very woman, natheless, be assured."

"Wilt thou come, good uncle?"

"I think not, child. I must remain here. Thou shalt be safe where thou goest, as scarcely human foot hath trod the place but our own; still thou must take the ten specially chosen to attend thee."

"Thou dost not think me afraid of aught there?" enquired she, with something like surprise.

"No, no, child; thou hast e'en too little fear; but thou knowest I have kept twenty of those who were to join Wallace, in order that thou mightst be

surrounded by the men he selected; so I shall not need them, and thou must not go forth with a smaller number; take Duncan also as guide. Bless thee, my child, a pleasant day," continued he, as he left her to order out the attendants.

About four hours before the time of which we are speaking, a considerable body of horsemen stopped at the gate of Cumnock Castle; and after a flourish from their trumpets, the warder, recognizing the penons, had the gate opened and drawbridge lowered. The two knights, Heselrig and Ridley, rode at their head, and they were met in the court by Sir Reginald Crawford, who received them with all courtesy.

"Welcome, brave friends. Ye take me somewhat unawares; natheless, we shall not fail to accommodate you all in such fashion as our poor house may."

"Thanks, Crawford, for thy courteous greeting," said Heselrig; "truly our coming is sudden, but thou knowest we poor men-at-arms must march at the bidding of our lords, when and where they choose."

" Even so it is, good comrade ; I pray you enter the Castle."

" But first, let me say these fellows are only to halt here for an hour ; then we go onwards on our journey ; and I prithee, good Captain, give orders that man and horse have needing refreshment."

" Instantly I shall," replied Reginald, who knew there was just the same degree of good will on Heselrig's part towards him which he entertained for that worthy Knight himself, and that the courtesy of both was somewhat strained to cover the real feelings of each. After they had entered the hall, and were fairly engaged in conversation, Reginald enquired if they were going towards Sanquhar Castle.

" No," replied Heselrig, briefly and unceremoniously ; and the questioner, though rather surprised, could not prosecute his queries ; but his mind immediately reverted to the haunted glen, and, at a venture, he remarked that they had seen or heard nothing of the Ettin, or the Enchantress, since the day when——

" Hush ! Sir Reginald Crawford," said Hesel-

rig gloomily, "speak not of that;" and then he added in a whisper, "the Lord Governor doth not like the tale, and it is forbidden among his followers."

"And thereby many a good deed of knighthood prevented," replied Crawford. "I myself have been commanded not to try it."

Thus they conversed coldly and under restraint, till the trumpets sounded to horse, and the Southrons proceeded on their expedition. As they rode slowly on, the two Knights a little in advance, Heselrig began to repeat the instructions he had already given to Ridley. "The guides know every inch of the locality; they will take thee to the very den of the outlaws."

"Thou canst rely on them entirely?" asked Ridley.

"Surely," said Heselrig; "they are villeins suborned and trained to the purpose; fellows, whom these greenwood knaves believe to be of themselves."

"And so perhaps they are," suggested Ridley.

Heselrig smiled grimly. "They were sent, some

weeks since, with a plausible tale of ill usage from their Southron masters, to herd with the rogues; they are men of Northumberland who have been long here, and can speak the gibberish, and sworn men of the Piercy; but, independent of that, they have been told of the instructions which are given, and which I now tell thee as thy last direction—"If thou dost perceive in the fellow that guides thy band any sign of treachery, thou art to cut him to pieces on the spot."

"If they are the born men of our Lord, I think we may trust them."

"Then, Richard Ridley, here we part; the spot where I expect to meet my quarry, and which another trusty agent will guide her to, is in this direction;" pointing to the east of the mountains that bound the glen.

Marion of Lammington went forth to the chase in a more sombre mood than usual; but the day was fine, and her spirits rose with the exercise. They soon reached the place where Duncan had discovered such abundance of game, and had met with some sport. But while her attendants

were beating the underwood in a particular spot, and she was watching as if she expected something to start out of it, a cry of alarm arose behind her; and, turning round, she perceived to her dismay a band of armed men in the act of surrounding her small party. The colour mounted to her cheek, and her eye flashed, as she demanded who they were.

The leader stepped forward, and "Fair lady—" he began.

"Blessed Virgin!" she exclaimed, "it is Heselrig! O help me, Heaven!"

Her followers drew close. Seizing her horn, she blew it instantly; then, in a voice that thrilled through Heselrig, "Stand back, man! approach me not!" she cried, at the same moment fitting an arrow to her bow.

"Nay, fairest creature, do not misunderstand me; I mean no harm, only thou must come with me. It is the command of the Governor; resistance is vain, I have five to one."

"If thou hadst a hundred to one, I would die rather than go with thee."

" Thou wilt do thyself an injury when none is intended."

At this moment it was observed that Duncan, who induced her to come there, had gone over to the ranks of the Southrons.

" Traitor! traitor! My brave friends, we are foully betrayed. Wilt thou shame those spurs thou dost wear, Sir Knight, and thus basely steal upon an unprotected damsel?"

" Lady, I pray thee, put thyself under my charge, and fear nothing," replied Heselrig, still advancing, and making a signal to his men to close in upon her.

Without more words, she discharged an arrow at him, which, striking on his helmet of proof, glanced off, without doing injury. At the same instant another from the hand of a follower, transfixed the treacherous Duncan. The rest was the work of an instant. The small party was overpowered, disarmed, or slain by the Southrons.

" Quick," cried Heselrig, " obey the orders al-

ready given. I know what a blast of that horn may bring on us. No time for courtesy."

The last remark was addressed to a man-at-arms, who was soothing, apparently, and comforting as well as he could, the despairing Marion. His directions were carried into effect immediately. Her face being muffled up to prevent speaking or crying, she was hurried off, along with her attendants who were able to go (the rest being stretched on the ground), to where they had left their horses, in a neighbouring glade. There she was speedily placed on horseback behind one of Heselrig's followers, and the band hastened away in the direction of the road leading down Nithsdale.

Meanwhile, the stronger detachment under Ridley pursued the course of the Afton, with undeviating certainty, until it arrived at the spot where we discovered Wallace and Marion seated in the last chapter, and crossing the Afton, entered the dell on the opposite side, following each other up its narrow channel in silence, but not without evincing many signs of surprise and wonder. A scout, perched on the cliff, had been struck

by the regularity and precision with which they advanced, and, when they entered the dell, he ran hastily to report the fact to his Chief, who guessed the truth at once, and took his measures accordingly. The Southrons had entered the winding path up the cliff, and were slowly ascending, when a voice that awoke the echo of the hills, demanded who they were, and what they wanted.

"On! on!" cried Ridley impatiently to his men, while he himself rapidly mounted. When he had gained the upper half of the ascent, he perceived that the road was beset by a number of strange looking people, whose aspect was frightful.

"Saints of Heaven!" exclaimed he, crossing himself, "are we among the savages of Ind!"

He was brave, however, as knight need to be, and instantly charged the foremost of them, fighting his way with a few to the very top; here he was confronted by one whose appearance was infinitely more startling than that of the rest. His size was gigantic, and at first sight his body seemed to be covered with his own red hair, saving where a plaid was so disposed as to cover him in front.

The eyes of this huge personage glared with preternatural fire as he stared on the Southrons; then, casting a glance on his own followers, he blew a short blast on his horn, which sounded like the war-note of some unknown being; in place of a club, he wielded on this occasion a large and heavy sword. Ridley gazed, his sword pointed towards him, in a sort of bewildered amazement, but he was speedily roused by the increasing noise below, and the necessity for acting with promptitude.

The Ettin appeared to regard quietly the astonishment of his enemies; but when Ridley drew himself up as if to attack, he called out,—"Back! ye Southron bloodhounds; what do ye here?"

"Whatever thou art," cried the other, "I will assail thee."

They then engaged hand to hand, while the battle raged around among their followers.

Ridley soon found that he was opposed to one who understood the use of arms as well as he, and whose blows fell like the strokes of some powerful engine. His armour long resisted them, however, and they fought on, until the Ettin, who seemed

neither tired nor wounded, while the other was nearly exhausted, threw his whole great strength into a blow, which laid open the corslet of the Knight and stretched him on the ground, where he lay motionless.

"Now yield thee, Southron, or die!" cried the Ettin; but the Knight replied not.

Meanwhile, the outlaws had hurled the opposing party, who were on the foot-path, back to the dell; and the noise of the strife continued there; while the few who had reached the top, seeing the fate of their leader, fled also with great precipitation, and, joining their comrades, to whom they related what had occurred, and that the Knight had been slain by a sort of savage giant, the whole began a retreat, which soon became a flight, followed by the outlaws.

It was not long before Sir Richard Ridley recovered sufficiently to sit up and gaze around him, marvelling exceedingly at the strange result of his undertaking; the noise of the pursuit, and the cries of terror from his men, mingling together, formed a sound which left no room to doubt that he had been defeated at all points, and by enemies as singular

as Christian knight ever encountered. In a short time, the individual who had overthrown him returned, and seeing that he had recovered his senses, demanded whether he rendered himself the captive of his arm, to which the other answered that he had no alternative. The Ettin, then stooping down, helped him to unlace his corslet, and without speaking a word, examined the wound, which was found to be slight; the force of the blow having stunned him, when he was worn out by the fight.

"Thou shalt not die of this wound, Sir Southron Knight," said the Ettin.

"Thou dost speak gently," replied Ridley, overcome with wonder, "and yet thy form is selcouth! In the name of Heaven, what art thou?"

"Keep thyself still," said the Ettin, "thou art not to put questions, but to remember that thou art a prisoner at my mercy. Is it so strange to find gentleness under a rude exterior; so wonderful, in wretched Scotland, to see the noblest of the land reduced to the garb of the greenwood by Southron oppression."

Silent and abashed, Ridley scanned curiously

the form of his conqueror, and perceived that what he believed to be his own hair, was in reality the natural covering of his dress, which, fitting tightly to his person, and shewing no joining or unevenness any where, seemed his own skin; beneath it his eye detected also, in some places which his sword had found, the glittering links of a shirt of mail.

"Thou seest the secret that hath terrified thy countrymen in these parts," said the Ettin, with a look of scornful triumph; "and thou knowest that no evil spirit of the wild hath overthrown thee. Be it so. I am heedless who may know it now. This is no longer a place for me."

"Too truly hast thou spoken, though unwittingly," cried the voice of Allan, from the other side of the cliff which he had just reached. "Woe! woe!"

He staggered forward, and, steadying himself on his bow, gazed piteously in Angus's face.

"What? what sayest thou? Speak!" exclaimed the latter, gazing with horror on his wounded follower; "where is she?"

Allan held down his head, and repeated the exclamation, "Woe, woe!"

"Speak, man! would'st drive me wild!" cried Angus, his aspect becoming extremely excited.

Startled by these words, Allan raised his head. "The traitor Duncan led us into a snare! my bow requited him; but we were surrounded, overpowered, and ——"

"Merciful Heaven! what next?"

"Captive;" uttered the other, in a voice that seemed choked.

Angus clasped his hands over his head, his countenance becoming wild and maniac-like. "Now! now! is my cup of bitterness full," ejaculated he. His rolling eye lighted on his prisoner; at one spring he seized him by the throat.

"Thy murderous kindred have reft mine innocent child; and shalt thou live?"

Ridley turned pale in his grasp, but offered no resistance; and Allan stepped forward with his drawn dagger, crying out, "Slay, slay him! my Chief! too poor a sacrifice to atone the deed."

Angus shook him several times, grinding his

teeth; and once he stretched out his hand to clutch his follower's dagger. Suddenly, however, he threw him from him, and with a wave of his hand motioned Allan to stand off.

"No," said he, in a low tone; "I thank heaven my senses have not left me altogether."

He stood long with his hands clasped, and his eyes fixed on the ground, until his prisoner perceived a tear to steal over either cheek. Then, heedless of all around him, he leaned his brow on a tree, and remained in that position for many minutes, the tears falling fast from his eyes.

Allan, in the meantime, cast many fierce looks on the captive; and it was evident that nothing but fear of his Chief prevented him, weak as he was, from assaulting him. At length Angus turned to them, and speaking calmly, yet firmly, he thus addressed the Southron:—

"Sir Knight, thou art my prisoner; and, in requital of the foul deed which thy friends have just committed, the laws of man, and thine own code of honour, would justify me in putting thee to death. I cannot, in cold blood, slay a fellow-

creature; and wert thou to remain here, thou wouldst be unsafe among my followers, as thou mayest well believe, from what thou dost see now. Come hither, Allan, mine old and trusty friend; rest thee on the ground, thou art sore wounded. Thou didst not pause to tell any one of thy dire mishap?"

"I saw not one," replied Allan; "but even now I hear a sound as of men approaching."

It was so; the outlaws were returning joyously from the pursuit.

"Allan," continued Angus, "we shall cause the Southron to say, we return good for evil. We shall shew them that our sense of honour is finer than theirs. This man must be allowed to go."

Allan shook his head, scowling ferociously on Ridley.

"Permit," said Ridley, who was of a different mould from Heselrig, "that I speak a few words. I know not what hath been done to which thy follower makes allusion; but of this be assured, that

I had no share in any act which the other band of my countrymen, whose commander was also mine, may have committed. I am ignorant of what they have done."

Angus looked at him steadily. His helmet was now off, and he displayed a handsome and youthful countenance, which bore on it the stamp of sincerity.—"Too good," muttered Angus; "too good for his foul work—for his tyrant King."

"Young man, thou mayest live to grieve over scenes like this, and to think of the wrongs we endure when thine own sufferings are at the height."

"Would to Heaven I could do aught to alleviate thine; but if I am allowed to return, thou mayest be assured that the Lord Piercy shall know what sort of men are here driven to the wilderness."

"Thou shalt not ask his pity for me, but thou canst tell him that Angus MacRie scorns him and his tyrant alike. Begone, Sir Knight! I see one who shall take thee safe through my band, and

then thou mayest readily find thy way to Cumnock Castle."

He turned away, and calling one of his men who just then appeared on the cliff, whispered a few words to him. Ridley lingered as if desirous of speaking again, but Angus motioned him impatiently off, and he departed with a feeling of perfect security, so well did he seem to understand the person he had just left.

The straggling and dismayed Southrons fled with the speed of despair before the enraged Scots, down the narrow gorge, on the other side of which their horses had been left, leaving many of their number behind. And on reaching their steeds, they mounted instantly and rode off as fast as possible to Cumnock Castle, where their disordered and dismayed appearance created surprise and consternation. Sir Reginald instantly despatched a party to succour Ridley and the wounded who were left behind; and with it went back as many of the discomfited band as terror would permit. They met the Knight near the opening of the pass, wending his way alone, but not suffering much

from his wounds. They informed him of their object.

"You may go," replied he, "in perfect safety, to carry off such as are hurt, but my malison be on ye all if you venture to assail the man who hath his abode there. He hath behaved towards us in a manner which my conscience tells me we do not deserve. I have his word, and sure I am, better assurance none can have that the Captain of Cumnock may send in all security to take off our wounded."

If they were surprised to find that he had escaped from these wild unearthly people, they marvelled still more at his words.

"I have seen and heard to-day," continued Sir Richard, addressing the leader of the Crawfords, "what I shall not forget in many years."

He then told, in the hearing of all, how he had been allowed to depart, ransomless and free, when the accounts had just arrived that Heselrig had seized and carried off the child of this Chief, and he himself expected nothing but death as a just retribution. But when he reached the Castle, and it was

told to Sir Reginald that the damsel whom he had so much admired was in the clutches of Heselrig, he could not contain his indignation, for he knew well the character of that Knight, and perhaps he knew also a little more of the maiden's history than he did when he saw her.

Striking the table at which he sat with his clenched fist, till the cups and dishes tumbled over each other, he started up with a loud malediction on the dastard who could be guilty of such a deed. "The Lord Governor," said he, "could not command it."

"In sooth, I wot not," answered Ridley; "but he shall soon know it."

"What!" continued Crawford, "she is pure as the flower of her own vale; he, foul as the lowest sink of iniquity!"

"Nay, nay, Crawford, thou art now too warm," interposed Ridley.

"I tell thee, man, thou knowest not," cried Crawford; then stopped abruptly.—"But thou art right, Ridley; the commands of our Ruler must be obeyed, and we must find out first how far He-

selrig hath warrandice for this deed; but if he hath not, I tell thee he shall break a lance with me, or bear the brand of dastard and craven hereafter."

Ridley began to wonder at this heat, and expressed a desire to learn where Reginald got any knowledge of the damsel. The latter, beginning to cool, became also more cautious, and freely acknowledged that he had seen her once on the hills, when he went in quest of the Red Ettin, and had been much interested by her appearance; but trying to give the conversation a different turn,— "Hast thou seen any thing of this giant?" enquired he.

"I think so," replied Ridley, smiling. "My friend, I have measured swords with, and, sooth to say, have been at the mercy of this Red Ettin; and what dost think I found him?"

All leaned forward to listen, and the hall was crowded.

"A man! no more than a man, nor less; but hark ye, Sir Reginald Crawford, I have seen few

men equal to him, all wild and savage as he doth seem."

The old Harper shook his head at this announcement, whispering to one who was near,—"He hath cast the glamour over him—the Ettin is wizard enough for that; credit me, the good Knight will find that he is no man of mould, ere the play be done."

These words, uttered with an oracular nod, intimated at least that Baldwin was not hastily to abandon a long-cherished belief, which he had interwoven with many a lay."

"I marvel," continued he, "what hath befallen the Minstrel of the Glen, in all this turmoil. I have not seen him for weeks."

"The Ettin hath devoured him, Baldwin," said a grinning man-at-arms, who had more faith in Ridley's account than the Harper desired; and the latter tossed his head with an indignant frown at the ill-timed jest.

It was late in the evening, when Ridley and such of his band as were able for the journey, arrived at the Castle of Ayr. Instantly demanding a private

audience of the Governor, he proceeded to lay before him the result of the expedition; and great was the Lord Piercy's astonishment, and even alarm, at this repetition of discomfiture in that sequestered glen; but when he heard of the personal encounter between Ridley and him who was known as the Ettin, his surprise broke out into sundry exclamations. "Angus M'Rie! that name hath been known to me in times long gone bye. He was then a youth like myself. When I was a 'squire-at-arms, his renown spread far as a warrior. I deemed him lost to the world after the ruin of his house, and I little thought to find him in arms on the hills."

He walked the apartment in considerable agitation, feeling the want of Heselrig, to whom he always more freely opened his mind. The idea of that personage suggested the inquiry as to where Ridley had parted from him.

The latter was anxious to know how far Heselrig had authority for the capture of Marion, and abruptly told him that they had separated at the

gorge of the glen, and he had not seen him since he " made captive of the damsel."

The Governor fixed his eyes on the Knight— " Captive! I think that is a wrong word, Ridley. Heselrig was ordered to proceed to Lanark, direct from Cumnock, and the damsel must have travelled with him to her friends of that shire. Captive! No, no."

" So the outlaws reported."

Ridley thought there was a slight start manifested by Piercy at these words; but he repeated, " No, no! no capture! Doubtless we shall hear from Heselrig to-night or to-morrow, and all shall be explained. Thou knowest that a large convoy will travel towards Lanark to-morrow. *Par Dieu!* we must strengthen our bands since outlaws are thus daring. Heard'st thou aught of another ranger of the woods, even Wallace?"

" No, my Lord; not a word was said about him yonder."

" Natheless, he must be in communication with my trusty friend, Angus, that is certain. Those men will not remain, thou sayest, in their fastness?"

" No ; they were to remove immediately ; indeed, now that their secrets are all disclosed, we cannot believe they would be so foolish as to remain."

" It is strange," continued Piercy, " that nothing hath been heard of this Wallace since his appearance here, when he was nearly slain."

" Perhaps slain outright," suggested Ridley.

" No, he is alive ; we have that information from a foolish slave, formerly one of Riccarton serfs, who doth haunt this garrison. He is a poor creature, certainly, and what he doth say is not to be heeded, but other circumstances confirm his statement. I had hopes that something might be heard of him on your expedition."

" May I enquire, my Lord, when Fenwick sets out ?"

" Early to-morrow morning—the wains are ready and the convoy. Thou art too much spent to go, Ridley ; but thy news will cause me to strengthen Fenwick's company. Beaumont shall go, and Featherstone, with some score or two of additional lances. Thou mayest retire—thy wound, thou saidst, is not much ?"

"A trifle, my Lord; I need rest only," and Ridley withdrew.

After he retired, Piercy walked long and anxiously in the apartment. It was evident he felt the shadow of coming events.

CHAPTER XIII.

Loud let the news through Scotland ring,
The Northern Eagle claps her wing.
Lord of the Isles.

After nightfall, a man was seen to issue from the Castle of Ayr in a careless sauntering manner, and to quicken his pace as he got clear of it. Onwards he went with steady step, until he passed the New Town; nor did he abate much of his speed till he had reached the leaguer of Wallace, near Allanton. This was Cormack in his ancient garb, but the man within newly created. He pondered in his journey over the news he had heard, and, fearing the effect which the capture of the damsel might have, even on Wallace's strong mind, he deemed it prudent to conceal it till the fight should be over. Entering a wood that skirted the

road, he found Wallace in the middle of the chosen leaders of his small force.

"Here is Cormack," cried he cheerfully; "he will tell if there is any alteration in Fenwick's band, or in his course."

"None," said Cormack, "in his course, but the Governor hath strengthened his band by two knights and three score lances."

"By my faith," said one of chiefs who (as did all the rest) wore his vizor down, "this is a goodly addition. Wherefore hath he done so?"

"Some rumours," replied Cormack, "of threatening outbreaks in the east, it is said."

"Whatever be the cause, it is the effect we have to do with, my friends; we must fight the better. I see not that we can alter our array."

A consultation then ensued, and it ended in Wallace's opinion, that no alteration should be made, being adopted. Cormack thought he knew some voices among the speakers, but there was no crest or bearing to denote the parties. That they were men of consequence, who wished not to be known, was evident from their armour, and

the trappings of their steeds, which stood behind, along with those of a small party of men-at-arms, which would not number a fourth of Fenwick's. Wallace's chief reliance was on his spearmen, vassals, and tenants of the barons who secretly favoured his cause. They counted nearly three hundred, while that portion of his opponent's force amounted to as many, supported by two hundred and fifty men-at-arms, fully equipped. It was in the latter that Wallace was so inferior, he having not more than from thirty to forty horsemen altogether. The band of outlaws from the hills of Cumnock being totally without defensive armour, saving their shields, he directed to occupy the wood that extended on each side of the road, choosing the highest ground in front of his position, and to keep up a continued discharge of arrows, especially on the spearmen of the enemy, who, being less effectually defended by armour, would suffer more from their short bows and arrows than the iron-clad horsemen. East of them about a bow-shot, Wallace disposed his spearmen in two schiltrons, a short distance apart from each other, the horse being

stationed along with that which was farthest east. He took up his own position in the first schiltron, or most westerly, judging that it would have to bear the full brunt of the Southrons' attack. The latter had also a small band of archers which the Scottish bowmen were to engage as well as the spearmen, and these Cumnock men were strictly commanded to keep at a little distance, hovering along the flanks of, and by no means coming to close quarters with, the enemy, without orders.

The schiltrons were drawn up across the road; their right resting on the wood which was occupied by his own archers, as has just been related, and their left covered by a brook with its high precipitous bank, which completely prevented attack from that direction. Thus was Wallace's small force disposed on that eventful day, when he struck the first blow for the freedom of his country; and it was about sunrise, when he knew the Southrons must be near, that he had them arranged and prepared by every mode of encouragement, the best of which was the exhibition of his own cheerful and dauntless countenance.

The Southrons advanced cautiously and in good order, evidently aware that there was a spirit abroad which was likely soon to break out against such detached parties as theirs. Their advanced guard, on turning an angle of the road, coming suddenly in sight of the Scots drawn up within a hundred yards of them, drew bridle, and galloped back forthwith to the main body, which halted instantly.

"Some robber outlaws," said Fenwick,—a large powerful man, whose tried prowess was held in great estimation by his countrymen—"we shall speedily disperse them."

He then ordered forward a party of his men-at-arms, to dislodge the small force that was in sight; and constituted, as he imagined, all that was opposed to him.—On, like a whirlwind, went a hundred horsemen with lance in rest, and down went the Scottish spears, down on their knees the front ranks of the schiltron; and back, like baffled dogs, from the encounter of a bear, recoiled the men-at-arms, leaving several behind them. Meanwhile, the cavalcade was slowly advancing; and, on coming in sight of the contending parties, the Southrons per-

ceived their fellows making repeated charges, apparently with little success, and leaving, at each attack, some of their numbers on the ground.

Fenwick, enraged at the opposition, cried out—"Dare the villains stand up thus! Upon them! St George and Fenwick!"

And the whole of the men-at-arms rushed on, shouting—"a Fenwick!—a Fenwick!"

"Hear you that name!" cried Wallace, in a voice of thunder, "I swear, no worse hath rung in Scotland! and I make my vow to God to put it down."

While he spoke, the English were approaching "full tilt;" and, though his small band met the charge firmly, he perceived, where Fenwick himself attacked, some men were slain, and the schiltron open. Rushing to the spot, he endeavoured to stop the influx of the enemy, and engaged Fenwick, who, his lance being broken, was dealing fearful blows with his sword on the heads of the Scots. Wallace had little chance of success with such a champion, he being on foot; yet he thrust so powerfully at him with his spear, that he had

nearly unhorsed him ; but Fenwick, recovering himself, dealt him in return a blow on his helmet, which would have stunned an ordinary man, yet had only the effect of rousing Wallace to extraordinary exertion. While they were thus occupied, the other schiltron moved up, with loud cries of "Wallace! Wallace and liberty!" and the small party of men-at-arms fearlessly attacked the Southron horsemen ; but their aid was of little effect to prevent the complete breaking of the first schiltron, from the number of the enemy, who poured in on it after Fenwick.

Wallace, glancing round, gave them a word which caused every man to run to the rear of the second phalanx, and form rapidly there, leaving him exposed to Fenwick and many others who surrounded him. His courage, and the effect of his blows, struck the Southrons with surprise ; but when they heard the name used as a battle-word by the Scots, they were less amazed than anxious about the result. Turning from Fenwick, he pushed a less formidable enemy from his horse by a thrust of his spear ; and jumping with the speed

of light into the saddle, he attacked another with the same success, Fenwick being then occupied with directing a simultaneous charge on this second schiltron. The Southrons took ground for their career, and Wallace placed himself in front, directly opposed to Fenwick, whom he thus encountered. The shock was so startling as to attract the notice of many on both sides; and when the Southrons withdrew from this attack, which was unsuccessful, both parties paused to gaze on the combat between their two champions, whose spears were both broken—for Fenwick had been supplied with another—and they drew their swords. "Thou art the outlaw thief, Wallace," "and thou my father's murderer," were the phrases exchanged between them, in voices which quivered with rage, as they attacked each other. Meanwhile the Southron spearmen had come down on the flank of the schiltron, under showers of arrows from the Cumnock men, who behaved bravely, and had dispersed the archers who were ordered into the wood to dislodge them; and, oppressed with an enemy in front and on the flank, the small schil-

tron could not maintain its ground without extraordinary prowess, both on its own part and that of its Chief;—indeed all of them fought that day like men "born to renown," who knew that much depended on the fight.

But their leader was in himself a host, and the result of his combat with Fenwick had a wonderful effect on both sides. Fenwick was slain, after an obstinate and gallant contest; and Wallace, having accomplished his object in taking a horse, dismounted immediately, and again took his position in the schiltron, amidst the loud shouts of his countrymen. The English stood for a moment aghast at the turn which this single encounter had taken; but, encouraged by the knight next in command to Fenwick, who was named Beaumont, they made another simultaneous charge on the small phalanx, which firmly maintained its ground, and the result decided the fate of the battle. Wallace encountered Beaumont, and although he was on foot in the first rank of the schiltron, he slew him with a stroke of his spear. Many others of the Southrons were left on the ground, after this most

disastrous of their onsets hitherto made. "The devil surely aids this outlaw champion," ejaculated Featherstone, who had now the command.

Wallace saw some hesitation on the part of the English men-at-arms; their spearmen, having already been repulsed, were standing aloof also, and he blew a short note on his horn, the signal for the Cumnock men to bear down with their broad-swords on the latter, while he ordered his own schiltron to advance slowly.

This onward movement disconcerted the English so much that their spearmen broke away and fled in great trepidation, followed by the men of Cumnock. But Wallace, ever wary, saw that if they continued the chase they must be exposed to the men-at-arms, who were preparing to charge them, and sounded another brief note, which recalled the obedient, though reluctant pursuers. He had reason to regret the want of horsemen now, for his small troop was totally unable to cope with a band that still outnumbered it in the proportion of five to one. As the latter kept its ground, however, he advanced the schiltron, flanked by the few horse-

men he had. The Southrons, encouraged by their leaders, made a last and ineffectual charge, which proved more severe on themselves than any they had previously made. The Scots having no other enemy to distract their attention, received them with such fury, that in an instant more than a score were cast from the saddle, while many others were grievously hurt. The Scottish men-at-arms continuing to assail them, and the men within the schiltron throwing their spears, while those in front thrust at every one within reach, they lost heart entirely, and left the field, followed by the bold hearts on horseback of the Scottish force, who pursued them until they were passed the wains, and in full flight for Ayr.

Wallace then, his heart swelling with triumphant exultation, and his followers vociferous in their joy, directed the long line of wagons to proceed into the interior of the forest, until they should deliberate on what course to take next. Then came Cormack's secret; and the agony of the strong man and the strong mind was frightful for his friends to contemplate.

He withdrew himself instantly into a retired spot, and after a while returned, with a grave and stern expression of countenance, but composed. His leaders, in the meantime, had agreed among themselves, that the wild country, near Lanark, which was densely covered with wood, would be their best retreat, as in the neighbourhood of Bothwell, Douglas, and other important castles, whose lords were in favour of Wallace. He gave in readily to their suggestion, and adopted it the more eagerly that Heselrig was now Sheriff of Lanark, his father having gone to England on the preceding day, and it was probable that his unhappy captive was immured in the Castle there. He could not doubt Heselrig's motives for this outrage ; and the known character of the man left him no hope that he would refrain from any measures by which he could obtain his object.

The joyous band, who were ignorant of their commander's afflictions, excepting the few leading men about his person, travelled cheerily throughout the following night, lighted by the moon, keeping the highway until they neared the spot which they had

fixed upon, a few miles north-east of Lanark, then struck off into the thick forest; and there, after resting from their fatigue, they constructed such bowers as outlaws were wont to rear beneath the greenwood tree, chiefly of wood, with turf and rushes for a roof. They had great difficulty in getting the large wains into the interior, but by levelling trees here, and leaving a waggon there, after unloading it, they succeeded in getting all in safely; and it was a supply sufficient to keep them from either hunting or attacking small parties of Southrons for some time; a chief object with them, as concealment was necessary at that period, especially as Lord Piercy might draw together all his forces to crush them at once, before the new friends whom this success would draw to them could have time to muster.

They were scarcely settled in their new encampment, when Wallace drew Cormack aside, and in his presence gave full vent to the bitterness of his soul; after which, pressing the hand of his faithful henchman, he thus addressed him: "Cormack, my old friend and playfellow, thou art now a tried

warrior on stricken field, and thou mayest learn from the rest that none went before thee: thy praises are rung in mine ear by all. This I expected; for thy courage was proved to me in a thousand ways before. I am now going to try thy stout heart and thy zeal for me, indeed. Thou seest, my friend, we must discover what this false Knight hath done with her, where he hath lodged her, and what method he is taking to bend her to his will."

"My dear master," said Cormack, "I shall travel night and day till I discover her; but I am in hopes the lady will meet with no ill usage, for I overheard the Lord Governor say to Sir Arthur of Heselrig, 'that she were a bride fit for a lord.'"

"And doth he know of this, the proud Piercy?" asked Wallace.

"I am sure he would not countenance severity; but it may be he hath suggested to his favourite that she would be a meet prize for him."

"I see not how that improves the matter, for he will be equally harsh and repulsive in any form

into which he puts his odious addresses—but how is this, Cormack, thou art pale !"

" A slight scratch with a lance; nothing to speak of," replied the henchman.

" Nay, it is not so." Wallace opened his doublet, and perceived a large gash in his side. " O Cormack ! Cormack ! this zeal in my behalf will injure me as much as thee ! It is folly, it is madness to sacrifice thyself thus ! Why didst thou not go with others who were hurt to the several friendly places near the field—Loudon for instance ?"

" Dear master, it will soon heal."

" It will kill thee, my friend, if thou dost lack help."

Cormack looked distressed at the idea of being laid up, but his Chief was peremptory ; and it was arranged that he should proceed next night on one of their horses to his old friend Simon of Hilton, where he would be tended by his former nurse, Wallace assuring him that the search after the Lady Marion would be conducted in the meantime by several others, on whom he could depend. Cormack found some consolation in the locality to

which the fate of war had destined him; yet, although he reflected on the pleasure he would derive from the company of Alice, his true heart ever reverted to the hard lot of his much-loved lady.

CHAPTER XIV.

"False traytor Knight," quod she, "no Knight at all!
But scorne of armes thou hast with guilty hand
Murdered my men and slayne my seneschall,
Mean'st thou to spoil myselfe that cannot thee withstande."

SPENSER.

HESELRIG and his band travelled with considerable celerity, until they were at some distance from Cumnock, and on the road leading to the pass through Douglas-dale into Lanarkshire. His captive had at first given way to grief, which vented itself in lamentations uttered in a low tone, and mixed with many sobs, for her uncle rather than herself; but her native courage, mingled with disdain of her captor, and anger at his daring outrage, soon got the better of her sorrow, and she maintained throughout a dignified silence, even when Heselrig approached, as their pace became slower, to assure

her of his most respectful attentions, and his regret at being obliged to commit this act of aggression, by the command of his lord, who behoved to protect the lady from a tribe of warlike freebooters, called Jardine, who were about to invade Cumnock to carry her off. She replied not, but she mused over this announcement, which tallied strangely with the fears she had entertained before, and it was well known that the mosstroopers of Annandale, in their raids, had often penetrated as far as Cumnock, and were well acquainted with the intervening country, but all this (thought she at last) he hath learnt from other quarters. The party, only stopping occasionally to allow her a little rest, journeyed steadily on, and reached Lanark Castle before midnight. The lady, with a maiden who had been seized along with her, was instantly conducted to apartments prepared for her, and treated with all honour.

Meanwhile, Heselrig was in doubt how to conduct himself towards her. Her exquisite beauty had enthralled him; and the graceful courage she exhibited, joined to the most artless and feminine

innocence, raised in him a feeling of admiration, which he had never experienced before. Then her possessions were considerable, and her rank equal at least to his own. These considerations induced him to woo her honourably, trusting to his own address to palliate the offence of her capture, and to recommend himself to her. But, again, the fiend within him, hardened by a course of lawless practices, whispered that it would he unworthy of him, given to mirth and gaiety as he was, to shackle himself in the bonds of matrimony, especially as his comrades would laugh him to scorn for his want of success with the Scottish maiden, in the manner most congenial to him. The next day, he was busied in the arrangements consequent on taking possession of his district; and, towards noon, he expected a reinforcement to his garrison from Ayr, in the convoy of those wagons we have mentioned, the spearmen of which were to remain with him.

Lanark was a large and strong castle, standing between the town of that name and the Clyde, in a country which was then, and for many cen-

turies before, one of the richest in Scotland; its apple gardens being celebrated in the songs of the ancient British inhabitants. Farther off the river, the district was wild moor or deep forest. In the latter, it was said, bands of runaway serfs, and freebooters of every sort, had of late begun to congregate in great numbers; and it was to enable him to act with vigour in suppressing these, that Lord Piercy, who was still his superior, had promised to strengthen the force in the Castle with part of the troops sent along with the supply of provisions. The elder Heselrig had already departed for Northumberland; and what he had long panted for—absolute and uncontrolled freedom in his actions—seemed now in the power of his son.

Notwithstanding the necessary attention to his new duties, he found time to wait on his captive; and on the way to her apartment, his fertile brain was busy in devising schemes and devices of every sort to lull suspicion, and dispose her to regard him favourably. Previously to visiting her, he had directed a supply of every article of clothing she might require to be carried to the apart-

ments. The attendants were enjoined to treat her with all the respect due to a noble lady, and they were strictly charged to provide every thing she should ask for; whilst he himself resolved to behave as if he was the most unfortunate of all men, in being selected for the odious task of her guardian, or jailor, as she would call the office. He adorned his person, too, in order to make him worthy to wait on such a guest. Heselrig's features were harsh and forbidding, rendered so, perhaps, more by the expression than the structure of them, which was peculiarly disagreeable, and seemed to those who knew him, to be the inner man looking out precisely. He was clad in a doublet and cloak of purple velvet, ornamented in various ways, light hose, and boots of a colour to suit his upper vestments, as was also a jewelled cap, that dangled in his hand as he entered.

The lady was standing at the casement when he made his appearance, bowing low. She turned round with much composure, and looked fixedly at him, without returning his salutation.

"Fair Lady," began the Knight, "let me hope

that thy comfort is attended to in all things by my people."

"One who hath made the greenwood her home, doth care little for what thou mayest call comforts," replied she.

"Yet, methinks, that soiled dress might have been changed, Lady; it doth not become thy place and dignity."

"Place!" cried she with scorn; "what place have I, when such as thou canst invade it with impunity?"

"Nay, not I, but my Lord."

"And who is he? some robber chief?"

The maiden stood trembling near her lady, regarding Heselrig with awe, and a sort of horror; and when she heard her youthful mistress thus addressing him, she became so dreadfully alarmed, as to lose all self-possession.

"Oh, Lady Marion!" cried she; "in the name of the Holy Virgin, speak not that way. Remember who he is—what he is"— And she fell at Heselrig's feet with clasped hands.

"Have pity on us! she is so young, so help-

less. Pity us, mighty lord!" continued the poor creature.

"Fear not," said Heselrig, what hath frightened thee so, poor timorous maiden? there is nought to alarm thee. Thy attendant, lady, doth lack some of thy spirit; the poor thing is even afraid of a shadow." These words were spoken in the most bland tones, as he raised the waiting-woman from the floor, Marion looking on him with a calm yet doubtful air.

"Still thee, Dora; what dost thou fear, silly creature. There is nothing in this Knight to wake thy foolish terror."

Dora shrank into a corner, and offered no more interruption.

"Lady," said Heselrig, smiling, "thy poor follower hath heard tales of faitour knights and bloody castles in her own hills, and she doth fancy every one to be such as minstrel tales have told her."

"I doubt not she hath heard of faitour knights, as thou dost say; but wherefore should she suspect thee, valiant champion, who art only forcibly

seizing helpless women to pleasure thy lord, whoever he may be."

"Even the mighty Governor of the West, Lord Piercy."

"What! the Piercy—he whom men call the proud, the chivalrous Piercy? I will not believe it," cried the damsel, with flashing eye. "Wouldst tell me that he, a great ruler in the land, would set the example of rapine and violence, within his own bounds, and furnish his followers with an excuse for every crime? Think not I am a child, and untaught. Heselrig, thou wilt find me otherwise!"

"Alas! what can I say?" replied he. "My unfortunate position, in regard to him, is exactly his in regard to his King. I must obey, or forfeit place and possession. He must carry into effect the orders of Edward, however stern and severe, or lose high place and power. Thou knowest a great lord is absolute over his vassals; such is the Piercy with me. That a king, of power so vast as Edward, hath command as absolute over his princely vassals, as the latter over their knights and

esquires, what then remains for each but obedience?"

"A freeborn spirit would seek the wilderness, ere bend to such tyranny," replied she, "supposing it were as thou sayest." Heselrig shook his head.

"As the world is constituted, men must conform to its ways, or seek, as thou hast said, the parts afar from human habitation; but few there are who would choose the latter."

"Freedom, then, is dead in thy land as in mine; and two nations are prostrate before the throne of a bloodthirsty and ambitious tyrant!"

"I may not say so, gentle maid," replied Heselrig with a soft smile.

"I care not what thou dost say; tell me how long I am to be captive here."

"The pleasure of my Lord regarding his fair charge, so he doth esteem mine honoured guest as a ward of the Crown, shall be known in two days."

"A ward of the Crown! How can that be, Sir Knight? my father never was subject of thy King."

"I know not, lady, whether thy sire hath paid

homage to Edward; but thy lands hold of the Crown, and so"——

"But not of the English crown, Southron? Yet let that pass until a better time; all is at the mercy of that crown now. Then must I content myself for two days in this hostile fortress."

"Let me entreat thee to consider it other than hostile. All here are devoted to thy service; and so entreating, fair lady, I take my leave."

Bowing low, he withdrew, more deeply impressed than ever with the extraordinary shrewdness and knowledge of the world possessed by one so very young. Little did he know of her early nurture, and the subsequent advantages she enjoyed in her constant intercourse with her uncle. "This gear will be difficult to manage," thought he, as he left her. She doth suspect me, and I fear she doth not like me either." But when he descended to the great hall, he had other matters to attend to, rumours having reached the garrison of a battle fought near Loudon, between a strong band of outlaws and the Southron troops on the way to Lanark.

Marion mused long after the departure of Heselrig. Her attendant at length roused her from her reverie by a deep sigh, or rather groan, given vent to apparently as an indication of the relief she experienced from the Knight's absence.

" Thou art a great coward, Dora," said the lady with a sweet smile, her natural, artless, and innocent manner returning at once.

" O Lady, that fearful man! I tremble but to look on him."

" So, indeed, thou dost; but wherefore ?"

" The tales we have heard; his own visage," replied the waiting gentlewoman, " are enough to scare the boldest; but surely woman was never before like thee."

" Man must be villain indeed to maltreat one like me, so young in years, so defenceless; it would be like an armed warrior murdering an infant. Yet thou mayest be right, my Dora, though I cannot see how we are to improve our condition by womanly wailing; trust me, a nature like this Heselrig's is to be more affected by courage than timidity."

" It may be so, Lady; but the marvel is, how

thou canst be bold when it is proper to be so. I am neither more timid nor courageous than other women; but Mary help me! I would die sooner than talk to this Knight as thou dost."

"Why, it is but loss of life," replied Marion, partly as if speaking to herself.

"Nay, sweet Lady," replied Dora, "it is more, far more."

"Not more!" replied Marion, "not more! by all the saints of Heaven! May the oath be forgiven, and the deed if necessary."

So saying, she put her hand, as if to feel it was safe and in its place, on the hilt of a small dagger which she wore concealed under her kirtle, in such a manner that she could grasp it instantly. Dora shuddered at the action, and covered her eyes. Marion looked with compassionating surprise on her attendant.

"Surely," said she, "thy life hath been passed amid peaceful and domestic scenes, and far from these broils and tumults which occur daily among men."

"Truly, Lady," replied Dora, "my fate hath

been to live among hills remote from the abodes of men, for, since I was seven years old, my home hath been the mountain and the moor, where, though want hath often pinched us, war and bloody deeds were unknown."

"Happy, O happy, had it been for me if I had never known any resting-place but the quiet vale of Afton! But my short life had been spent in strife and bloodshed before I found that quiet retreat. Feudal hate—the lust of midnight plunderer—left me a helpless orphan."

"I know the sad tale, dear Lady; and rest assured that, though you had more courageous maidens near the Moffat hills, thou hadst none that loved thee more."

"Well do I believe it, dear Dora; thou hast shewn thy great affection in a thousand ways, and thou hast been to me, since I went to Cumnock, my faithful and kind friend."

"I would I were bolder—and an outlaw's child should be so; but perhaps, dear Lady, I may acquire courage, for yet I have never needed it till this time."

" Mayhap thou wilt," replied Marion, with a smile. " We are both young, for I think thou canst not number three more years than I; and never had women more necessity for having their resolution and their wits about them! My poor uncle! Alas! alas! he will wail for me even more than he who must be now deeply engaged in the cause of his country; but the mishap will be dreadful to both, and I tremble to think of it, far more than the presence of a thousand Heselrigs could cause me to do."

She sat down and mused silently, the tears falling fast over her cheeks. After a long pause,— " Could we but find one man who is a friend," said Dora, " they will discover us! Doubt it not, maiden, Scotland has not a place so hidden but true love will find it out!"

" A friend on this dreary pile, natheless, would be of use in letting others know where we are. Lady, the countenance of this Lord, Knight, or Sheriff, whatever he be called, is like the cloud that covers the peak of Cairnsmuir when thunder is about to roll: it hath that in it which maketh

one tremble to look upon! Yet he was courteous!"

"Thou hast penetration with thy simplicity, Dora. I know this man. He hath cast his eye on my possessions, and he hath resolved to play the kind host—albeit the lying one—in hopes that he may win my favour. Thus we are safe for a short space; but when the truth is told, the wolf, whose prey is reft from him, will not be more savage or more remorseless. My hope is, that Wallace, whose bold heart and scheming head are fit for any device and any enterprise, will find us out, and obtain our freedom, before our gaoler hath discovered my secret. Oh! what would I give for intelligence of him, and of mine uncle! Methinks all my own misery would vanish then."

"Perhaps we may learn something from the menials. They may be civil to us; at least I am sure the man behind whom I rode, though a Southron, was a well-spoken, kind man, as much as he dared to be."

"I believe they are too good for him they serve,

but they dare not disobey his orders; and I fear he will not let them converse much with us."

"With permission, I will try," said Dora, her spirits reviving with this conversation.

The acute mind of Marion had at once detected the hypocrisy of Heselrig; and his change of manner from the gay libertine, which he openly shewed himself to be on his first interview with her, to the respectful and gallant Knight in presence of fair lady, did not fail to meet with due interpretation. She now felt anxious to impart some of her courage to her companion in captivity, for her timidity rendered her both miserable and useless.

Perhaps the terror of the one was less surprising than the composure of the other under all the circumstances; for in the short time he had been in the western districts, Heselrig had established a very odious reputation among the native population, not only as a person recklessly libertine in his pursuits, but entirely regardless of the feelings, interests, or even lives of those who came under his mercy; and it was fully expected, that the unfortunate people

of the district, which was now to be immediately subject to his rule, would experience in an increased degree, corresponding to the distance he was removed from the surveillance of his lord, the natural bent of disposition. In the meantime, he began to imagine that his government was not to be one of ease and indulgence, as he anticipated, for the rumours of a battle fought with Wallace came thicker and faster, with more of truth and circumstance in every fresh report.

And while he was pondering over them, and waiting anxiously for definite information, he was roused by an alarm from another quarter; a detachment he had despatched early in the morning, as he was resolved to lose no time in shewing his zeal to learn further tidings regarding the outlaws, who had harassed those who were favourable to the English near Lesmahagow, returned in great disorder about noon, having fallen in with a number of wild men, in strange attire, who attacked them like fiends.

"Wild men!" thought he, "can they have crossed over so soon? Didst thou observe any cognisance

among them, Folkham ?" enquired he of the 'Squire who commanded the party; "their Chief bore on his shield a hooded hawk, which was the only bearing or distinguishing sign among them."

"Strange! fought they well these savages?"

"Desperately, my Lord; and but that we were mounted, we had fared badly, for they outnumbered my small force much."

"Yet he cannot have very many with him, Folkham. I know this man, it is of vast importance to me that he should be made captive, and he who takes him shall be rewarded beyond expectation."

"We must talk again of this; but while the people are distracted with these infernal tales of that villain outlaw on the other side, we must think of nothing else. Heardst thou aught of him? —this Wallace I mean?"

"Nothing, save what hath already reached the Castle. Men say, besides, that the Black Knight of Douglasdale is about to betake himself to the greenwood also. And, by my faith, if Wallace doth discomfit Fenwick, we shall have work beyond our means in this neighbourhood, where our un-

friends are many, and our adherents but lukewarm."

"Well, we must be stirring an need be; to thee I trust, as long in the place, for knowledge regarding the people."

When left alone, Heselrig muttered to himself, "I must have this crazy kinsman of hers in my power; then shall I be armed in all ways. If she will not yield to fair treatment and honied words, why then, the threat of the rack or the gibbet for Angus of Cumnock, will serve my turn; and if it do not, he hath richly earned that doom as traitor to Edward and enemy to me." He rubbed his hands in joyful anticipation, and then his cogitations took another turn.

"The Governor must be hoodwinked, and luckily those moss-trooping Jardines make that task easy. The story I invented of the dead Birnok's brother being about to claim his bride for himself, as part of his inheritance, hath gained credence every where. What need then, but I improve it with another tale, of an actual attempt made by the lawless youth, which, though

defeated, caused me to take the precaution of lodging the lady of Lammington in my Castle, for it is evident she cannot enjoy security unless under powerful protection."

He then once more congratulated himself on his improving prospects, and proceeded to discharge the functions of his office.

Angus, fully aware that his haunts in Afton were no longer safe from the attempts of the Governor, set out on the very afternoon on which his niece had been carried off, with the double object of finding some new spot in the wilderness where he might pitch his tent, and of gaining tidings of the lost one. He guessed, accurately enough, the course of Heselrig, and he was able to trace him, by the footprints of his horses, through the wild district where Muirkirk now stands, and down the pass into Lanarkshire. Being well acquainted with the quarter, he struck across the hills, near Glenbuck, towards the remote district of Lesmahago, resolved to select a suitable place there, whence he could sally forth to make inquiries regarding the inmates of Lanark Castle, in which, he

doubted not, his kinswoman was immured, and it was while yet occupied in finding a proper locality, that he fell in with the horsemen of Folkham. The sight of them inflamed his somewhat disordered mind, and, with little consideration, he urged on his rude followers to the attack. Luckily, there was a precipitous and rough eminence near, almost inaccessible to horses, which they fell back upon, after discharging a shower of arrows at the Southrons. Here they easily defended themselves, and repulsed the attack. This success induced him to fortify by felled trees, and such other means as were in his power, this hill, for he believed his own small band able to cope with a much larger force if not mounted; and it was in the neighbourhood of Lanark, and also most likely of Wallace, who, he knew, if he was successful, would select the woods on one side of Lanark as a good central position for his purpose. But before doing this, he despatched two of his men, who were most intelligent, and who understood the Saxon tongue, to that town, in quest of such information as they could obtain there; and he was provided plenti-

fully with disguises for occasions of the sort. In the meantime he was racked with anxiety about Marion, as well as panting for news of the affair at Allanton; but he had yet another object in view in settling in that neighbourhood.

He had long been aware, from the constant communication kept up by various bands of outlaws scattered over the country, that this locality was the favourite resort of a great many, and that, being in the centre of a district, the barons and landowners of which were suspected of being more than usually averse to Southron domination, it was among the best that could be chosen for those operations which Wallace was conducting, and which he desired to aid to the utmost of his power. Thus, in making a rude fortress in the middle of the forest, he calculated on its being a central point, where the several bands, then in possession of the woods, would be drawn together, and where they might meet to arrange their plans and hold consultations on any emergency. In fact, he knew that the eyes of the country were now directed to Wallace; and if he succeeded in the at-

tempt he was now making, the greenwood would swarm with malcontents of a higher class than that which had hitherto occupied it, and which indeed consisted, almost entirely, of oppressed and outraged burghers, yeomen, and serfs, who had been driven by hard usage beyond the limits of human endurance, to attempt any thing, however desperate, to better their condition. The barons felt their own injuries as deeply, but having more to lose, and knowing well the great power of Edward of England, they would not engage in any rising which did not afford another prospect than that of increasing their present sufferings, by making their burthens heavier and more intolerable, as had already happened more than once.

CHAPTER XV.

True was it sayd, whatever man it sayd,
That love with gall and honey doth abound,
And if the one be with the other weigh'd;
For every dram of honey therein found,
A pound of gall doth over it redound.

SPENSER.

CORMACK, waiting till the moon was up, set out as commanded for the residence of his old friend, Simon of Hilton, but the pain of his wound rendered his progress so slow, that the dawn was appearing over the hills to the east, ere he reached his destination, and the menials of the place were beginning to move about, preparatory to their daily occupation. The sound of the horses' feet soon brought down Simon in person, who eyed in silence, and in considerable doubt, the person of the stranger, as it appeared in the grey twilight of the morning.

"I bid you good morrow, Master of Hilton," said Cormack, in rather feeble tones; "wilt thou receive an old friend, who doth lack thy helping hand?"

"Help, to one who deserved it, was never asked in vain here," replied Simon doubtfully; "but I know thee not—whence art thou, stranger?"

"Even from a fair field of fight, where my luck hath been to catch a spear point in my jack," said Cormack, amused by the perplexity his friend exhibited.

"Some southern loon," muttered Simon under his beard, "who hath gotten a skelp at Allanton—Humph! fair sir! there be many unfriends of established rule abroad in these perilous times. I may not let you in, till I know you better."

"Canst thou not remember me, goodman?"

"By my faith, no, for I cannot see thy face; but the voice is not strange to me either." Thus speaking, he approached close to Cormack, peering into his face, then started back in astonishment.

"St Mary of Kyle! Can it be—art thou my friend Cormack?"

" Even so, goodman."

Instantly Simon's voice was exalted for help, and ere it arrived, he whispered, " Hide thy visage; thou must have another name here. We have heard, and God be praised for it! of Allanton fight."

" And what news from Carrick, good friend?" continued he, as some of his men appeared, and assisted Cormack to dismount. " So! gently! this ague is a severe handler, but we shall soon make you well here."

He was safely lodged in the guest's room of the small tenement; and Simon bustled around him, with great assiduity, until he had been duly refreshed, and advised to repose, for an hour or two, till he had recovered from his fatigue. Leaving him thus alone, with his own curiosity ungratified, was a token of Simon's general kindness of disposition, and his especial regard for Cormack. He went immediately to seek out his daughter, whom the unusual bustle had also roused at that early hour.

It must be here observed, that Cormack had

found occasion, while on the various missions in which he was employed by Wallace, to pay sundry visits to Hilton; whether to cultivate, more particularly, the acquaintance of Simon or of his daughter, we shall not say; but it is certain the former never doubted that the visits were all designed for him, and as marks of the youth's gratitude for the kindness he had shewn him, in training him to the use of arms. He could not imagine that a slave-born lad would presume to raise his eyes to the only child of a substantial yeoman, whose sires had on more than one occasion taken their wives from the families of the smaller gentry; and, being naturally slow of apprehension, he could not perceive any thing between the young people which betokened aught but respectful duty on the one part, and the kindness of the mistress of a house on the other. When he bluntly announced who the stranger was, she felt a heat suddenly rising in her face, which caused her to stoop towards the floor, and when she rose upright, it had disappeared.

"And, good father, I pray you, why doth the

long-legged hallanshaker come here to run thy lands and thy life in danger?"

Simon stared at this question.

"Thou wouldst not send the poor lad away in that condition; wouldst thou, child?"

"Marry come up!" cried she, with an indignant toss of her head. "Is there no place but Hilton for all the riff-raff, who take to forest and to robbery, to escape wholesome labour? I wot not why William Wallace doth not keep and tend all the broken men about him, since he will gather such together, when they chance to get hurt in his service?"

"Why, lass, thou art surely fey this morning! It was only yesterday thou didst rejoice more than I at the news of this fight," said Simon, in increasing surprise.

"Ay, truly," replied she, snappishly; "it is very well to be glad when one doth hear of the Southron oppressor being worsted; and it is well, too, to be alarmed when our necks are near a halter. What will our lord say to all this? Will he not be wroth because of our imprudence?"

Simon's anger now rose. "Hark'ye, young mistress, this house is my own; and, not for twenty barons would I drive away a hurt friend, who doth need succour so much, from my door. Keep thyself quiet, and do not provoke me farther; and when the youth hath rested, thou must be ready with proper dressing for his hurts."

Whether the anger of the maiden was driven off by that of her father, or whether, in point of fact, she had not succeeded in emitting from him the very declaration she wanted, which implies also that her wrath was feigned, we shall not pretend to determine; but, after a pause, she resumed the conversation in a more temperate and placable tone—"But what wilt thou do, father? I say not it is wrong, but doubtless there is danger in it."

"Nay, child," replied Simon; "it may be as thou sayest, but truly I did not think of anything except aiding a good lad, who had fought bravely, as all say, and who is, moreover, chosen henchman to our young champion. Thou wouldst have done

so thyself, on the instant, thou saucy one, with all thy wisdom."

"Well! but," said she, evading the last remark, "what is to be done to guard against evil?"

Simon raised his bonnet, and scratched his head, looking at her the while, as if he expected she would suggest something; but she remained silent. "Plague on it, wilt not speak? Thou hast a sharper brain than mine, which was never very bright at a pinch.

"I think our lord will have reason to believe that thou art not acting properly, if thou dost keep this young man here without his knowledge."

"That is just what I thought," answered Simon; "and as I always consult him, I believe the best thing I can do is to take his advice in this also; but I shall not turn away the lad."

"He will not desire thee to do so, father; he is a kind man, and my lady too would favour Cormack in every way."

"It is but little she can know of a poor man like him," said Simon; "but she is a good and a kind lady, certainly. Well, when he is awake, I

shall converse with him, and learn all about the fight, that I may tell them at the Castle; but truly it is needless, for I jalouse there are some in it who know as well as Cormack about the business." So saying, Simon cast a sly look on his daughter, and, shaking his head, left the room.

In about two hours afterwards he entered the apartment of the invalid, and found him just getting out of the hands of his daughter, and one of her maidens, who had poured the healing balsam into his wound, and bound it up. "And how far'st thou now, lad? Aha! thou hast a better look."

"Altogether better; thanks to you and the kind mistress here."

"In troth, thou lookest bravely. What sayest thou, lass, is it much?"

"Not so wide nor so deep as your plough-furrow, father. Yet it is a gallantish scratch too," replied the daughter.

"Pooh! I warrant me Cormack would heed little a dozen such."

"Nay, master," said the attending maiden, "my mistress thinks——

"Hold thy tongue, Agnes; mind not what I think," cried Alice impatiently. "We must now leave them to fight over again the battle of Allanton." And she and her attendant left the room.

Cormack sat up, and declared himself almost recovered.

"Then thou art strong enough to go over with me the particulars of this little bruilzie with the Southrons?" asked Simon.

"Most able and willing," replied Cormack; and without farther preface, he began the story of the fight, and went through it as it has been narrated, with the exception of an occasional exclamation of surprise at the wonderful prowess of his master, which he averred to surpass any thing that had ever been seen before.

"A sharp stramash! a very sharp stramash!" said Simon, a little tinge of jealousy influencing him; "but thou must not think, lad, that a tuilzie like it is to be compared with such breaking of spears and crushing of helmets, as I have seen."

"Hadst thou seen our Chief, thou wouldst say that no crushing of helmets was ever done more

felly — no spears ever more manfully splintered."

"I doubt it not, lad; I doubt it not," said Simon, really delighted to hear of his favourite's deeds; "and he laid well on the thieves, eh?"

"Thou wouldst have thought there was no other man to wield a Scottish weapon, so ready was he every where. And when that doughty Fenwick broke in on the schiltron, he stood in against him and his men-at-arms, maintaining the fight till the other schiltron came up, and the men of the first re-formed in it, almost alone."

"St Andrew!" continued Cormack, his eye lightening at the recollection, "there was a sight seldom witnessed in any wars you have seen, Simon of Hilton; a single spearman on foot, opposed to a host, the lances crashing on his side, the swords ringing on his helmet, and his own spear, at every push almost, dismounting a man. I cried out, Wallace! Wallace! as lustily as I could, for my place was just behind him; and one of them charged me in such a manner, that my jack had been poor fence; but my stout master saw him

and with a side thrust sent him to the ground, as he passed, then jumping on his horse, he ran at Fenwick; but they were separated then in the meleé. It was not long before they met again, and Sir Fenwick bit the dust."

"Well done! well done," cried Simon, in exultation, "that is the best of it; go on, lad; go on."

"Then he turned his horse loose, and quietly took his place in the schiltron again; but in all the fight, no good action escaped him, and his word of praise was ever ready—'Ha! good lance!' he would cry, when one of our few horsemen struck down a Southron man-at-arms; 'and well pushed,' when a spearman did the same. But there were no strokes in the field like his own. Beaumont came after Fenwick, in command of the Southrons, and seeing my lord fighting in the second rank as if all depended on him, he ran at him furiously, and he stood like a rock, minding the crashing lance no more than a bulrush. But it was different with the other, for my master's spear went through

his breastplate as an it were a plaid, and came out a handsbreath at his back."

"Brave youth! glorious warrior!" cried Simon in ecstasy, "how this will thrill through the very marrow of his Loudon kinsmen. There is not a man who does not grumble at being kept from this fight, not one! Even I myself, albeit used to fighting for forty years, told Sir Ranald that I felt ashamed; and he was pleased to say I was not over wise. It may be, the phrase was somewhat harsher; but if I am a fool, I guess he is no better, for I think he had also a hankering after his nephew. Yet there were some of us there; this thou wottest of Cormack." This last observation was accompanied by a wink and a lowering of the voice—

"Truly, I suspected as much; but they were all cased in armour, that is to say, the few men-at-arms we had; but I detected some voices that I was well assured did belong to Crawfords; and my valiant master nearly revealed one of them. In a charge, our horsemen were mingled in front of the schiltron with the Southron; and

a young man-at-arms, shouting Wallace with all his might, tilted at a Southron just before us, and tumbled him from his horse."

"Good lance! have a care, Childe!" cried my master hastily, on seeing another coming upon the conqueror unawares. Doubtless, at the moment, he was surprised out of his usual prudence; it saved young Torringan, however, for he it must have been; at least, I know no other of his acquaintance who is called "Childe."

"And a brave gallant it is too," said Simon, who was now rubbing his hands, and pacing the apartment in all the glee of a boy who had succeeded in some frolic. "Thou shalt know when I return who were there. I must tell my good Lord of our guest, and, I doubt not, he will be glad to hear of thee; albeit there may be risk in harbouring one who hath been with Wallace at Allanton, for he hath faith in my prudence."

"Loth was I to endanger thee and thine," said Cormack; "but it pleased my master to command it, so that I could not refuse."

"And it doth shew the great value he sets on

thee," said Simon, who had penetration enough to perceive that Wallace would not send any one there whom he could not trust.

Scarcely had Simon departed for the Castle when Alice found her way back to the chamber of her patient, and was soon engaged in a serious and confidential conversation with him.

"Alas!" exclaimed she, "the good, kind-hearted lady! And what thinkst thou, dear Cormack, hath been her hap? what dost thou surmise?"

"I can guess," replied Cormack; "that foul Knight had his own evil purposes; but I doubt not, when he finds of what a spirit she is, he will think of his Lord's advice, and of the damsel's broad lands; and then, for she doth abhor him, and will not conceal it, he may devise practices to bring about a marriage, that he may possess them."

"And where hath he bestowed her?"

"In Lanark, without doubt, or some stronghold near, in Southron hands, where he may practise on her with impunity."

" O that I were near, Cormack, to aid and support her."

" It is kind of thee, dear Alice; but what could a feeble girl do there? She doth not lack courage; do not think so; she is the bravest damsel man e'er saw. Thou dost think thyself bold now, but if thou didst see her in danger, thou wouldst believe thyself to be a very coward."

" Yet thou knowest I am not easily frightened," replied she, smiling.

" Thou art extremely bold with thy father, and it may be with some one else," answered Cormack; " but doth not thy heart sink, and thy cheek turn pale, when thou art in the Southron's hands? ay, by my sooth, like a partridge in the falcon's talons."

" How dost thou know that?"

" Why, my own good lord told me how thou didst look when he released thee at Riccarton Bridge; but I like thee all the better for it, dear Alice; I myself wish to be thought the bold one of the two."

" O dear, I am sure I need courage if I have it not, for we are but poorly sted, my friend, since

thou wilt have us as one. It is true, I believe, that thou sayest; for even when I am sauciest with the Goodman of Hilton, there is a sort of beating in my breast that doth plague me sadly. He doth not suspect any thing, Cormack; and he is surely the slowest to uptake what is going on, of any man I ever saw."

"I would not that he should, until I have acquired a name that will gild the lowliness of my origin, for thou seest, Alice, I am not insensible to the advantage thou hast over me in that respect. Thou art of free ancestry, I the son of a line of slaves."

"I heed it not, for even under the silken doublets of our knights and 'squires, I see little so noble as in thee. Thy courage is equal to theirs; thy parts and acquirements much superior to the majority of them; and I know thee and them so well, that I can declare thee to be in all respects above them, save one."

"And that is everything in their estimation. Doth not the gentle 'squire despise my scholar craft as beneath the dignity of a gentleman? And doth

not the latter consist entirely in birth? In a lower grade, extraction is still looked to, therefore do I not blame thy worthy father in keeping up, as he doth say, his estate of yeomanry free from servile stain, such as that which a slave-born man would bring on the race."

"Thou dost think of every one before thyself," said the maiden, with a sigh, "but it is like thee. Thou wouldst not be Cormack an thou didst not. Such a man as William Wallace would not love thee and trust thee as he doth if thou wert not altogether of different mould from other men."

"Thou dost speak fondly, dear Alice," replied Cormack, smiling, "and I hope thou wilt never have reason to be ashamed of me."

"Ashamed of thee! when all men are so loud in thy praise! Thou art the only one who doth not seem to know the worth and the valour of Cormack the henchman."

"I pray thee cease, thou wilt make me vain. Wait till those qualities have raised me, so that I may aspire to thee, and I shall allow thee to talk so of me."

"Well, well," replied she, "thou art as open as thou art honest. Another and more crafty suitor would tell me I myself am not a person of any birth or consideration, and cast ridicule on my father's whims. Thou mayest think I delight in teasing him, yet it is not so. I can smile at his peculiarities, but no daughter doth love father better than I do, as thou well knowest, and it would ill become me to give him pain. Therefore must you wait, my friend, and console thyself with the plighted troth thou hast in word if not in deed. I shall never wed other than thee."

"I believe and trust thee, Alice, as I would one of our holy apostles, were he to appear on earth," said Cormack, with much earnestness. There was an honest simplicity about him, and an innocent maiden frankness about her, apparent in the looks of each, which gave the impress of truth to all they said; and they had in one another the most perfect confidence.

Thus their secret and inmost thoughts were, on all points, freely revealed to each other. Cormack, on this occasion, had been declaring the extreme

anxiety he felt regarding the fate of the lady Marion, and his ardent desire to be well soon, that he might assist in the search, and perhaps in the liberation of her. And Alice had assured him, that in a week, although his wound could not be healed, he would be sufficiently well to engage in the enterprise. "She will suffer more on account of others than herself, I know," said Cormack, "for her mind is altogether superior to that of ordinary mortals. If thou hadst seen, my Alice, how she tended, like the most patient and tender nurse, her poor brainsick uncle, and wept over him in his affliction, thou wouldst have believed her to be formed for the gentlest and most delicate offices of domestic life; and then, if thou hadst heard the tales men tell of her courage in difficulty, thou shouldst imagine her to be such a person as the blind bard of Greece fabled to be the goddess of war, fighting among men."

"Nay," said Alice; "I know nothing of the goddess thou speakest of; but I think she must be one talked of in the books, out of which thy master, and this strange man, Angus of Cumnock,

have spoken to thee so much, and made thee what thy maligners choose to call a learned serf."

"Him thou dost call a strange man, Alice, is the ruin of one whom Nature designed for the noblest purposes. Born in a high place, he inherited from his race the loftiest aspirations, and the purest feelings. Feudal hate, the curse of our great ones, and the rapacity of a royal favourite, hurled him out of his sphere. He became a monk, and there, in deep devotion to study, he sought to hide his better feelings, and was for a time successful; but the rankling sore at length broke out, accelerated by the oppression he every day witnessed of his kindred and his countrymen. He left his retirement for the bustling scenes of life, but there he was unlike other men; and he passed his time still partly among his books, but chiefly in teaching the children of his cousin Malcolm of Elderslie. Thus my master acquired his great knowledge, which thou knowest exceeds that of any lord in Scotland."

"What will become of him, Cormack, unsettled in his mind, and cast on the wilderness, among the

various and motley groups that harbour there; he will be lost?"

"Thou knowest him not. At times his highly gifted soul would seem to give place to a fiend within him; but, ever after a little, he is himself again, and both an able counsellor and a stalwart warrior. I warrant thee we shall hear of his feats if he keep out of Southron hands, for doubtless now they will try to seize him; but I fear chiefly the effect of the lady's loss on his infirm mind. I cannot tell what that may be."

"O, Cormack, if thy master doth succeed in freeing his country from such scenes of woe, as must now be acting with this hapless lady, and her no less wretched uncle, to say nothing of the good Wallace himself, his name should be hallowed in all times coming as a saint of Heaven!" cried she, with enthusiastic ardour.

"And that he will succeed, we cannot doubt," said Cormack, more quietly; "but it may be with the loss of him and the best of our earliest patriots. If it be so, Alice dear, thou wilt scarcely find Cormack among the survivors."

"If they are doomed," said she with a sigh, "thou, as one of the first and most devoted of his followers, must go down also; but kind Heaven will avert such calamity. We are in the hands of a merciful and all-knowing Providence, which, sooner or later, doth avenge on themselves the evil deeds of cruel and wicked men; and I will not look to the future, Cormack, with a gloomy brow."

From day to day, Cormack improved under the skilful attention and the tender care of Alice, with whom he enjoyed many delightful interviews, varied occasionally with conversations of a more bellicose nature with her father, and the principal followers of Sir Ranald, who were in the secret, and who never tired of discussing the adventures of Wallace and his band. The old Baron in person saw him, and with great caution (as he thought), but not sufficient to hoodwink Cormack, informed him that compassion for himself, and a desire to rescue his nephew from the Governor, had induced him to permit his being harboured within his bounds, but he trusted that his master, and of course he himself, would abandon such dangerous

courses, with a great deal of reasoning equally profound, which he would have spared had he known how much his listener knew.

On the day previous to his intended departure, Cormack (who had for several days been arrayed in the loose garments of an invalid, in which he reclined on a long wooden bench with a back, resembling the frame of a sofa, in a little apartment fitted up by Alice for him) donned his doublet and hose, and shewed himself about the doors of the steading.

Agnes, the confidential maiden of Alice, who had not seen Cormack for some time in health, and who was ignorant that he and the wounded man were the same, was struck with his appearance.

"What a look he hath of that youth who came from Riccarton, and was so wild-like—he whom I saw here some weeks ago, much improved; but, St Mary! it cannot be the same,—this is either another or a new man!"

"Canst thou keep a secret, Agnes?" said her mistress. I will trust thee, for I am sure thou would'st injure no one. It is the same!"

Can it be possible!" cried Agnes; "but I see how it is," continued she, after musing a little; "it is liberty! my mistress. He is like the stag of the field escaped from the pen-fold of the keeper—like the young war-horse freed from the trammels of the stable—like one on whose springs of life the load of slavery hath pressed so heavily, that its removal is just as if a cloud passed off from the moon, leaving its natural aspect in its primitive beauty. Never, on the face of one in thraldom was seen the noble and manly expression which this man's countenance bears."

"There is more, Agnes; his mind hath been awakened by the indraught of knowledge, which thou and I can have no notion of."

"Yea, it may be so," said Agnes, herself a serf; "but the most hidden secrets in knowledge, when revealed to man, would not thus ennoble his visage, and cause him to carry his head erect to the heavens, shewing that he feels no one hath property in him."

She hung her head, and Alice mentally resolved

that she should not be long a serf if she could accomplish her emancipation.

"Thou hast always been my kind mistress," said Agnes; "and I do not hesitate to say unto thee what my untaught nature may prompt. Doth it not seem strange, that the free men of our country, who are so impatient of the yoke imposed on them by a stranger, should keep so many of their countrymen in bondage?"

"Thou art acute, Agnes; and I fear, my poor girl, thy mind hath led thee to dangerous ground. Do not, child, for all that I can say to thee, talk to any other person in this strain; it may be misunderstood as indicating a rebellious spirit."

"To no one but thee would I venture so to speak," replied Alice, with downcast look. "It is the outpouring of my own thoughts, and no one hath suggested them."

"I believe it; and if any others in thy station were to speak to me, Agnes, I would scarcely know what to say; but I know thy truth and fidelity. Therefore I say unto thee, that the good Wallace doth intend that the whole class of serfs

shall, in the course of this struggle, which hath just commenced, be restored to freedom; they have all reason to pray for his success."

"And to spend their blood in it," cried Agnes, —"to die for it; I myself would cheerfully, the cause is so sacred."

"Thou art a strange lass," said Alice, regarding her stern and excited look with surprise.

"Why do they not proclaim freedom to the bondsmen at once, and summon them to defend their new found rights?" enquired Agnes.

"I pretend not to understand such weighty matters. Doubtless there are reasons, and we had better say no more about it."

"My dear mistress will not misunderstand me," said Agnes. "I speak not of my own state, for it hath been blessed; but few there are in Southron hands now, that do not curse the day they were born; and who knows when it may be my fate, perhaps thine, free as thou art, to be bondswoman to the conqueror, if this bold, yet somewhat desperate attempt should fail?"

"Such might be," said Alice; "but I think the

spirit of our Scottish people, whether free or bond, hath now been roused, and the quarrel shall not end in favour of the Southron till most of the nation be exterminated; that is my own poor opinion, Agnes. Now, let us to our spinning-gear, and forget this sad subject."

On the same day, the somewhat reserved Laird of Drongan arrived to hold a conversation with Simon and his guests; and, after discussing the never-failing topic, the latter withdrew, in order to see as much as possible of Alice before his departure on the following day.

"The lad is stark and stout, friend Simon," said Drongan. "Truly, he hath mended wonderfully; but his wound is still a great gap; natheless, Alice thinks it will soon be well."

"She hath been his leech throughout."

"Surely, she hath, like other maidens, paid much attention to such things, and hath skill."

"I doubt it not; and I doubt not either, that Cormack would prefer her to our Castle leech, the good Father Eustace," said Drongan, with a sly look, which sat so strangely on his unaccustomed

visage, that even the somewhat stolid Simon was affected by it.

After Drongan's departure, such an extraordinary thing as a joke from him dwelt in Simon's mind so long and so effectually, that by the next morning, he had arrived at an indistinct conviction of what every one but he knew perfectly well. But before he had made up his mind, the now obnoxious Cormack had departed, and he had only his daughter on whom to vent the wrath that boiled over. A scene of reproach and of altercation ensued, for she had been a spoiled child, and feared not to tell her father that Cormack was even too good for his daughter ; and it ended in his forbidding all intercourse between them on pain of disinheritance, and in a burst of grief on her part, which, with all her pretended resolution, she could not control.

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